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SLURRING EPITHETS AND GENERIC DESCRIPTIVISM

The Meaning and the Epistemology of Ethnically Derogatory Terms

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SLURRING EPITHETS AND GENERIC
DESCRIPTIVISM:

The Meaning and the Epistemology of
Ethnically Derogatory Terms

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Dedicated to my Mother and to the memory of my Father.

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ABSTRACT

Slurring epithets or slurs like ‘Frog’ and ‘Boche’ are derogative terms but it is unclear why they are derogatory. This work discusses several proposals to answer this question. One commonality with the discussed views is that they all hold that derogation has something to do with semantics, broadly with the meaning of slurs. I disagree with this. I go on to introduce *generic descriptivism*. It is a novel view to handle slurs and it has two distinctive features.

First, generic descriptivism holds that the nature of derogation is epistemic. derogation is due to the information which slurs contain. This is specified with the notion of stereotype. I claim that *negative* and *unwarranted* stereotypes are responsible for derogation. This information is not semantic. That is, it is to be distinguished from the meaning of slurs.

Secondly, the eponymous feature of generic descriptivism is that it holds that the information which slurs contain is *generic*. I argue that generic beliefs are produced with a psychological mechanism of generalisation. In relation to social kinds, the mechanism can produce xenophobic generalisations and the use of slurs display these *negative beliefs*. Derogation is due to this negative information which the slurs contain.

PRELIMINARIES

Caution

This work contains offensive language. However, the offensive words are only mentioned, they are not applied to anyone. I find it illuminating to use actual slurs as example. For that purpose, I have chosen slurs which are outdated. I use slurs like ‘Frog’ for the French and ‘Boche’ for the Germans. Even though these slurs not as highly charged as some of the more current slurs, I think they work well enough for illustrative purposes. More current slurs do come up in this work, mainly in quotations. However, I have tried keep those instances to the minimum.

Terminological notes

Concepts and linguistic expressions

I follow the convention that concepts are denoted with SMALL CAPS and linguistic expressions are denoted with single quotation marks, for example ‘Hesperus’. In case there is any ambiguity due to this convention, I stress that this work is first and foremost about linguistic expressions. So *my* claims are about linguistic expressions.

Direct quotation

Short direct quotations are indicated with double quotation marks, e.g “Truth is immune to epithetical color”. Longer quotations are not indicated with quotation marks. They are separated with a space and with

an indentation.

Linguistic evidence

The linguistic evidence in this work is mostly anecdotal. While admitting this, I insist on two points. First, I do not think that the linguistic evidence which supports my view is in anyway controversial. Secondly, even anecdotal evidence tells something about the way language is used.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Slurs and derogation: central features

1.1.1 Nature of derogation

Slurs are expressions like ‘Boche’, ‘Frog’ and ‘Limey’. On the one hand, they seem to be common nouns, just like the ‘Germans’, the ‘French’ and the ‘English’ are but, on the other hand, they seem to import something extra. They are derogatory expressions and they seem to belittle the addressed. Some of the more current slurs are much more charged and it is fair to say that they do not just belittle the target but rather *dehumanise* those to whom the slur is applied.

To say the least, the use of slurs is offensive. The use offends the person or the group that the slur is applied to. The main question about slurs is what causes this offence. The receiving end of the utterance:

- (1) Max is a Boche.

is entitled to be offended. The question is why not only Max but also anyone of German descent hearing (1) is entitled to be offended. It seems that the term ‘Boche’ produces the entitlement.¹ Let us call this feature of slurs *derogation*.² Slurs are then derogatory expressions. If one uses a

¹There is more anecdotal discussion on the entitlement below.

²There are many terms for this feature. For example, you can speak of insult or you can say that the use slurs is offensive. Some people have sug-

slur, one gives offence. The invited question then is:

What is the property of slurs that makes their use offensive?

This is the focus of our investigation and there are two specific sub-questions:

- (i) What is the derogatory feature?
- (ii) Is the derogatory feature part of the meaning or is it something outside the meaning of the slurs?

The main question is approached through these sub-questions. They aim to explain the entitlement to be offended by investigating what is the exact nature of derogation and how derogation is attached to slurs. In the course of the argumentation, I will go through different proposals concerning the nature of derogation. At the same time, the proposals inevitably offer a view on how derogation is attached to a given slur.

1.1.2 Central features

As language users, we have a lot of intuitions concerning the use of slurs and sometimes these intuitions can be conflicting. The motivation for putting forward these central features is to narrow down the scope of the investigation. In other words, the central features aim to map the common ground concerning slurs. In my view, four main features of slurs and derogation are

A. Derogation is autonomous.

B. Target of derogation is a social group.

C. Slurs are epithets.

gested that slurs express contemptuous attitude. I chose ‘derogation’ because it seems the most neutral term. According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, derogation means “detraction from the honour, or reputation of; lowering or lessening in value or estimation, disparagement, depreciation”. (The entry is the following: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/derogation>.) This is, I think, a fair description of what happens with slurs. At any rate, slurs can express other attitudes than contempt and the use of slurs is not always offensive.

D. Derogation is systematic.

These features are confirmed by most theories out there. One could say that the features from A to D are the minimal features of slurs which are still confirmed by the intuitions of the majority of speakers. Because most of the theories also aim to explain these features, it is justified to say that with these features we can reach a minimal level of agreement.

A. *Autonomy of derogation*

It has been noted that a slur is a device which is used to express contempt for, to deride, and to insult its targets. It has also been argued that slurs can be used to insult, vilify and to snub. (Richard 2008, 15; Hornsby 2001, 135.) As accurate as these remarks are, they seem to concentrate on how slurs are used *intentionally* but it should also be added that the consequence of the use of slurs is derogation, whatever the intention is. It is also noted that slurs are among the most rhetorically powerful and insidious expressions in a language (Camp 2013, 330). The emphasis is now on the word ‘insidious’ just because slurs are offensive even when derogation is not intended. It is an assumption of this work that derogation just comes with the slur. Derogation is *autonomous* from anyone’s intentions.³ One could say that the derogatory feature is there despite anyone’s intentions. For example, if someone used ‘Boche’ in a soundcheck instead of “one, two, three . . .”, it would probably upset the audience just as much if it was applied to someone. The point is that in this case the slur is not intentionally applied to anyone in the audience and yet it can be offensive.

However, it seems a fairly uncontroversial claim that slurs do not always derogate. There is for example the *in-group* use. This might also be called *re-appropriated* use. When slurs are used within the target group, the effect can be the opposite. In these situations, slurs may create solidarity among the group, certainly not derogation. (See e.g. Richard 2008, 12.) However, it will be argued here that this effect is parasitical to the

³The term ‘autonomous’ is borrowed from Pekka Väyrynen: “Racial slurs provide a robust example of expressions which carry objectionable content autonomously from speaker’s intentions” (Väyrynen 2009, 441).

main effect of slurs which is derogation. The idea is that even when a slur is subject to in-group, the target is *entitled to be offended* but that entitlement is often waved within the group. In his seminal book *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*, Randall Kennedy says that there were different ways to use the N-word, already when he was growing up:

There was often a generational difference in evidence in competing uses of the N-word with younger people experimenting with nonderogatory versions. On the other hand, while some of my younger relatives are adamantly opposed to any use of *nigger*, believing it to be only and unalterably a debasing slur, some of my older relatives anticipated by many years the transformation of *nigger* (or “nigga”) that is now widely attributed to the hip-hop culture. Long before the rapper Ice-T insisted upon being called a nigger, my father declared that he was proud to be a “stone nigger”—by which he meant a black man without pretensions who was unafraid to enjoy himself openly and loudly despite the objections of condescending whites or insecure blacks. (Kennedy 2002, xvii.)

Just because Kennedy’s surrounding black community was divided in his childhood concerning the use of the N-word, the use of the word, even his father’s use, brought about the entitlement to be offended as Kennedy’s younger relatives (who believed the word is “unalterably a debasing slur”) might have been be offended with any use of the word. The upshot is that even within the target groups, slurs wear derogation on their sleeve.

B. Social group as a target

Slurs differ from common pejorative expressions, such as ‘you idiot’. This contrast seems to bring out another essential feature of slurs. When slurs are used, the target is always a specific ethnic group, religious group or sexual orientation. Even nationality can be the basis of a slur.⁴ Luvell

⁴Most of the slurs used as examples in this work are, in fact, based on nationality.

Andersen and Ernest Lepore note: “the apparent presumption is that anyone who uses the N-word slurs all black people, but one who uses ‘moron’ needn’t be slurring every mentally disabled person” (Andersen and Lepore 2013, 26). In general, the target of a slur is a social group. Even when the target is clearly an individual, the individual is a target as a representative of a social group.

The term ‘target’ has a two-fold purpose. It specifies the extension of a slur. For example, the extension of ‘Boche’ is the Germans. At the same time, derogation *targets* the Germans. So the term ‘target’ includes two components. The extension of the slur is the *target group* of derogation. This is the view I am proposing but, in distinction to my view, some of the views discussed below hold that the extension of a slur and the target of derogation are distinct. For example, Christopher Hom and Robert May think that the extension of slurs is uniformly empty but a slur like ‘Boche’ still targets the Germans. That is, the *derogation* is directed towards the Germans.

When someone utters (1), the offence is based on Max’s ethnic background. Namely, the offence is based on the fact that Max is a member of certain social group, the Germans. As it has been emphasised, the target can just as easily be a whole group, as in

(2) The Boches are cruel.

At the same time, in contrast to (2), we have (3) which shows that slurring epithets are not essential in offensive language. You can present offensive thoughts with neutral terms too, as in

(3) The Germans are cruel.

One of the features of slurs is that the mere use of a particular slur produces the offence. If there is not much difference between (2) and (3), observe the contrast between the following statements

(4) The Germans are honest.

(5) The Boches are honest.

In both cases, the same property is attributed to the Germans, honesty. The attribution of honesty, in general, should be a commendation but still (5) remains offensive. The upshot is that although (5) is probably meant as a commendation or at least as a neutral, factual statement, it remains offensive and this is the special feature of slurring epithets.

C. slurs as epithets

According to *Merriam-Webster dictionary*, epithets are often associated with racial abuse, especially in the current use. It seems that there are good reasons for this. Epithets are *characterising* words that can occur in the place of a name or a person or a thing, says *Merriam-Webster*.⁵ There are two important points to notice. First, epithets are names that characterise the referent in some way. For example, the epithet ‘Alexander the Great’ describes Alexander as great because he did conquer a good part of the known world. Secondly, they can be somewhat colloquial names. Alfred the Bald was also known by the people as ‘Alfred the Fat’. Hence, epithets are conventionally and colloquially recognised other names for the target.

Both of these features play a part in the way I see ethnic slurs. I take them to be conventionally recognised. For example, the conventional slur for the French is ‘Frog’, not ‘toad’. The conventional slur for the English is ‘Limey’, not ‘lemon’. Slurs are not just any kind of abusive constructions but they are conventionally recognised as derogatory terms. Let us take the ‘John Terry case’ as an example. There is no doubt that when Chelsea played against Queen’s Park Rangers in 2011, Chelsea’s John Terry ethnically abused QPR’s Anton Ferdinand by saying ‘you fucking black cunt’ and this was widely covered in the media. The altercation was covered in the media as “John Terry’s *slur*”. I am not claiming that the characterisation in the media was inaccurate but I want to concentrate on a narrower characterisation of slurs. The concentration here is on *epithets*. That is to say, a slur is an established noun and it usually has a neutral counterpart,

⁵The online entry is the following:
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epithet>

for example ‘German’ in the case of ‘Boche’. If the concentration was on any linguistic (complex) construction, then we might learn that there is nothing special about slurs. However, the assumption here is that there is something special about slurs. After all, slurs are not the only words that can be derogatory. As Terry’s utterance shows, you can surely achieve ethnic abuse without the use of abusive *epithets*.

Finally, one of the crucial features of epithets is that the referent of a given epithet is somehow earned the epithet. Because Alexander conquered a good part of the known world, he earned the descriptive epithet ‘Great’. Similarly, with the slurring epithets, the idea is that the xenophobes think that the target has earned the derogatory epithet. The xenophobes think that the slurring epithet is appropriate because it characterises the target in the right way. This is discussed in detail next.

D. Systematic derogation

John Terry received £220 000 fine plus a ban from four Chelsea Premier League matches. A notable thing is that the whole altercation was initiated by Anton Ferdinand. He abused Terry with the words ‘you fucking cunt’ first and Terry responded to this by just adding the word ‘black’ to the abuse: ‘you fucking black cunt’. However, The FA Commission did not fine Ferdinand for the initial abuse. It might be speculated that the Commission thought that it is not their job to monitor how harsh language players might use. This is an essential difference between slurs and say ‘bastard’. Slurs are always offensive and should not be used at all. Whereas, there seems to be appropriate uses of the word ‘bastard’. It expresses contempt towards the target but maybe the person deserves this contempt. Maybe the target just is a very nasty person and someone had to point that out, even if it is done in a very harsh manner but that is, more or less, a matter of taste. Observe the contrast between (6) and (7):

- (6) That bastard stole my car.
- (7) That Boche stole my car.

It could be that (6) is appropriate given the circumstances but that is a matter of taste but (7) is never appropriate. You can imagine even a more horrendous crime which could make the harsh language in (6) more appropriate. But it does not matter how horrible the crime is, (7) still remains offensive and inappropriate. Slurs are derogatory and inappropriate in a systematic way.

There is a further point that highlights the decision to concentrate on atomic construction and on the systematic nature of derogation that accompanies these slurring epithets (understood as conventionally recognised names). Some philosophers have claimed that slurs can be expressed in many ways, even in extralinguistic ways. It has been noted that the use of a slur is like saying out loud the neutral word while making a rude gesture. It has also been noted elsewhere that slurring can be accomplished, among other things, by tone like sneering and gesture like looks of disgust. (See Hornsby 2009, 128-141 and also Hom and May 2013, 298.) My first response to this idea is that it seems to me that gestures and tone are more comparable to slurs like the one Terry used. If this is so, there could actually be appropriate uses of these expressions even when they are coupled with expressions of ethnicity. Let me illustrate this with another Chelsea-related football anecdote. In March 2016, Paris Saint-Germain eliminated Chelsea from the Champions League. Imagine a die-hard Chelsea fan commenting the match:

(8) ...and then those fucking French scored another goal ...

This line of commentary is at least excusable. Even more so, if we know that the speaker uses the F-word frequently. I am even willing to say that these kind of comments may even be part of the package. As a proper fan you are not supposed to like the opposing club when it is hammering your own club. Nevertheless, the following remark is not excusable, let alone part of the package:

(9) ...and then those Frogs scored another goal ...

The inappropriateness of (9) is not lessened if the speaker uses the slur frequently; quite the opposite. Xenophobia is not a part of the package

in football (or anywhere else). In the light of this example, I think it is justified to concentrate first and foremost on *epithets*, instead of any kind of complex linguistic constructions or any kind of extralinguistic expressions.

1.2 Civilised and xenophobic speakers

It goes without saying that the question “what are slurs?” is important to anyone who is interested in the topic. Another question, of almost equal importance, is “who uses slurs?”. Slurs divide speakers into two categories, to

civilised speakers who do *not* apply them.

and to

xenophobic speakers who apply slurs.⁶

There is a small but crucial difference between the use and the application. Civilised people may use slurs for educational purposes. A parent might say to a child:

(10) Do not ever use the word ‘Boche’!

⁶I am not completely happy with the terms used in this distinction. Especially, I am dissatisfied with the term ‘civilised’. I borrowed the term from Timothy Williamson (2009, 137-158). Still, the term is indeterminate in respect to the criteria of being civilised. Are some speakers more civilised because their linguistic competence is superior to xenophobes (as Christopher Hom and Robert May argue)? Are some speakers more civilised because they have better moral compass and wish not to offend anyone? And finally, are they epistemically in better position to evaluate xenophobic beliefs? It seems to me that this indeterminacy is resolvable. I will argue that civilised people have an epistemically better handle to evaluate xenophobic beliefs. Because of the epistemic edge, civilised people are more equipped to evaluate the appropriateness of expressing xenophobic beliefs.

A more difficult problem concerns the *genealogy* of the term ‘civilised’. For colonialism was largely justified with the distinction between civilised Westerners and uncivilised natives. It was the civilised nature of the colonisers that justified their racism. That is, it justified that the civilised Westerners ruled the uncivilised natives. This was pointed out to me by Cassie Herbert in Third Barcelona Conference on Gender, Race, and Sexuality in June 2016. Still, I am happier with the term ‘civilised’ than with any other term. It seems to me that the specification that a civilised speaker has a better handle on the epistemic consequences of the use of slurs, makes the term most apt for people who do not use slurs.

In this work, slurs are used frequently as examples. Importantly, in these educational uses they are not applied to anyone. The parent in (10) or an author of academic thesis on slurs does not apply slurs like the speaker in (1) and (2) applies them. They are only examples and hence (to use an old distinction) only mentioned, not applied to anyone. The speaker of (7) applies a slur to the car thief and the speaker of (5) applies the slur to a German. That is why (5) and (7) are offensive.

On the basis of this, it seems obvious to say that civilised speakers do not apply slurs. But to articulate why civilised people do not apply them, seems to go to heart of the problem. To give it an initial stab, what has been said above might give us a clue. So far we have seen, first, that slurs express derogation and hence the use of a slur gives the *entitlement* to be offended and, secondly, that they target social groups. From these points can be drawn the conclusion that with slurs are expressions of xenophobic attitudes and when slurs are used, the targets are entitled to be offended. And unless the speaker specifically wanted to express a xenophobic attitude towards an individual or a social group, the speaker should refrain from using slurs.

Mark Richard points out that slurs “express strong negative attitudes towards member of a group, attitudes in some sense grounded in nothing more than membership in the group” (Richard 2008, 12). People who refrain from using slurs do not want to insult, vilify or derogate people on the basis of their belonging to some social group. People who use slurs seem to have no such problems. This marks a difference between a xenophobic person and a civilised person. For the xenophobe the mere inclusion in some social group entitles him to derogate and to offend people but for the civilised person the mere inclusion in a certain group does not yet entitle derogation. It may very well be that the target is a hateful and petty person and hence deserves the speaker’s contempt. However, a civilised person does not pretend to know that on the basis of the target’s ethnicity, nationality or religion. The upshot is that while both parties, the xenophobes and the civilised speakers, probably agree that slurs express contempt and derogate their targets, the xenophobes think that this

contempt or derogation is justified; whereas civilised people think that the contempt is baseless and thereby wish not to express it. To illustrate the situation, one could say that xenophobes confuse slurs for words like ‘bastard’. They think that the membership in a certain social group justifies the use of slur, just like it might be justified to call a car thief a ‘bastard’.

1.3 Cognitivism and non-cognitivism

1.3.1 Thickness in metaethics

One major strand in the study of slurs is the metaethical study of thick concepts. It already provides an important distinction which is very much present throughout this work. Within the tradition of moral philosophy, factual statements like

- (11) Snow is white.

are distinguished from moral statements like

- (12) Lying is wrong.

It is thought that the first one is true if and if only (iff from now on) it is a fact that snow is white. But concerning the second one it is doubtful whether there is a factual correspondence to the moral statement. It is thought the second one expresses the speaker’s attitude towards lying. The statements attributes a moral evaluation to lying, either (morally) good or (morally) bad or simply ‘hurray’ or ‘boo’ evaluation.⁷ There are also concepts that can have “a bit of both”. These concepts are called *thick concepts*. On the one hand, thick concepts have descriptive (i.e. factual) content. On the other hand, they also have moral content. For example, LIAR can be thought to be such a concept. Considering (12), most of us

⁷Of course, there are views according to which the two previous statements are on a par. Both correspond to facts. It is just that the second one corresponds to a moral fact. For example, Cornell Realists have argued for this kind view (see Boyd 1988, 181-228 and Sturgeon 1988, 229-255). But for the illustrative purposes, let us keep the discussion simple and concentrate on the expressivist tradition within moral philosophy.

do confirm the sentence. We think lying is morally reprehensible. As a consequence, the sentence

(13) Max is a liar

not only has truth conditions (it is true iff Max does lie frequently) but it also adds a moral evaluation on Max's conduct. The discussion on thick concepts provides a good starting point also for the study of slurs. Metaethical discussion on thickness began in the sixties and it has at least two parties, the *cognitivist* and the *non-cognitivist*.

Non-cognitivism: reductive thickness

A thick concept comprises two thin parts. It has an descriptive part and it has an evaluative part.⁸ The cognitivist and the non-cognitivist argue about the relationship between these two parts. According to the non-cognitivist, there is a clear distinction between the two parts. The descriptive part explicates the reference of the term and the evaluative part adds a moral evaluation of the reference, either good or bad, right or wrong or simply 'hurray' or 'boo'. In his *Freedom and Reason* (1963), R. M. Hare cited as an example concepts like **INDUSTRIOUS** and **COURAGEOUS**. These are concepts which have an extension but they also express moral appraisal towards the target.

The flipside of the coin is concepts which come with a 'boo'. In connection to these words, Hare says: "if we want, in the Southern States, to speak to a [black person] as an equal, we cannot do so by addressing him as a nigger" (Hare 1963, 25). According to Hare, the N-word expresses a moral evaluation of the target which is objectionable and unless we specifically want to adhere to those objectionable moral values, we should not use the word. This is the *non-cognitivist* view about thickness. The idea is that the slur 'Boche' has two parts: the descriptive part fixes the reference to the Germans and simultaneously the slur adds a 'boo' evaluation toward the Germans. This is sometimes called a reductive view because

⁸This is generally agreed on but, as explained below, there are also dissidents like David Hume and Simon Blackburn.

the thickness can be reduced to two thin bits: to the descriptive part on the one hand and to the evaluation on the other. (See e.g. Elstein and Hurka 2009, 515-535.)

Cognitivism: entangled thickness

Hare's view on thickness soon enough gained opposition. The main source of this opposition is John McDowell. He challenged the reductive view. The challenge could be paraphrased in the following way. Cognitivism agrees that thick concepts have two parts but it denies the reduction. There are some thick concepts which are very difficult to explain in a reductive sense. Sometimes the two parts are entangled in such a way that they may not be separated so easily. Let us call this the *Entanglement Challenge*. It is very difficult to apply COURAGEOUS to someone if one does not understand what it is to morally admire courageous acts:

Consider, for instance, a specific conception of some moral virtue: the conception current in a reasonably cohesive moral community. If the disentangling manoeuvre is always possible, that implies that the extension of the associated term, as it would be used by someone who belonged to the community, could be mastered independently of the special concerns which, in the community, would show themselves in admiration or emulation of actions seen as falling under the concept. (McDowell 2002, 201.)

According to McDowell, there are thick concepts which include two parts such that they are inseparable so that one cannot learn a thick concept in a piecemeal fashion: first one understands the extension and then one learns to appreciate the evaluation which the thick concept carries (or perhaps the other way round). This is McDowell's original point about *understanding of thickness*.

McDowell's thought has gained support from Bernard Williams and from Hilary Putnam. Williams repeats McDowell's point by saying that "an effective point" has been made against the non-cognitivist view and

he summarises it as follows. If the non-cognitivist view is right, then there should be a neutral term which picks up exactly the same reference as the thick one but without the moral evaluation. (Williams 2006, 141-142.) However, it is indeed very hard to think of a purely descriptive concept that picks up the very same reference as COURAGEOUS or picks up the very same reference as the concept CRUEL has but without the evaluation. We can label this the point as the *absence of descriptive synonymy*.

Hilary Putnam explains the dialectics by noting that there is a long tradition which distinguishes between *subjective* value judgements and *objective* statements of facts. Statements of facts which are objectively true are distinguished from value judgements which are incapable of being objectively true. Putnam's point is to reject this distinction.⁹ He goes on to discuss thick concepts. According to him, non-cognitivism adheres to the distinction. In the face of the entanglement, the non-cognitivist has two options how to deal with thickness:

- (i) *Deny thickness*: Insist that thick concept can be reduced exhaustively either to the descriptive part or to the evaluative part.
- (ii) *Claim that thickness is reducible to two distinguishable parts*: The purely descriptive part which states the matters of facts and an attitudinal part which expresses 'boo' or 'hurray' attitudes.

Option (i) was taken by David Hume, at least according to Putnam. Hume discuss the factuality of CRIME by which Hume meant 'grievous wrong' and Hume denied that there are any such matters of facts as 'grievous wrong'. This then means that Hume denied the descriptive component of CRIME. Thereby thick concepts express only 'boo' or 'hurray' attitudes. Simon Blackburn picks option (i) too as he says that thickness is very much overrated (usually by the cognitivists). The contrast to Hume is that Blackburn believes that thickness is completely reducible to the descriptive part (Blackburn 2010, 129-146). Option (ii) is taken by Hare. Hare thinks

⁹It seems obvious that Putnam is aiming his criticism towards the distinction between sentences (11) and (12).

that CRUEL is the kind of concept that lends to two-part analysis as seen above.

However, Putnam is not impressed by either option and he thinks that the entanglement argument challenges them both. He repeats Williams' explication of the argument. Putnam thinks that it is impossible to say what is the descriptive component of CRUEL without using the word 'cruel' or a synonym (which, presumably, is equally thick). Hare suggests that the descriptive part of CRUEL is 'causing to suffer deeply'. Against this Putnam says:

[I]t certainly is not the case that the extension of 'cruel' (setting the evaluation aside, as it were) is simply 'causing deep suffering', *nor*, as Hare himself should have noticed, is 'causes deep suffering' itself free of evaluative force (Putnam 2002, 38).

Putnam then goes on to give an example. Think of the nineteenth century doctors before the introduction of anaesthesia. At that time, any surgical operation caused great pain but we would not describe the doctors or the surgical acts as cruel.

However, the non-cognitivist could appeal to the so-called *doctrine of double effect*. The doctrine admits that some morally good acts might also have bad consequences but adds that such acts should be distinguished from acts that aim only at the bad consequences. It could be argued that what distinguishes doctor's attempts to save a patient from acts of torture is the *intention* that accompanies the acts. (see e.g. Quinn 1989, 334-351.) If this kind of appeal to the doctrine of double effect is successful, then there is a way to paraphrase 'cruelty'. However, it is still a question whether 'intentionally causing deep suffering' is free from evaluative force. It may not be. Hence, it seems to me that Putnam is warranted in quoting McDowell:

Now, it seems reasonable to be sceptical about whether the disentangling manoeuvre can always be effected; specifically, about whether, corresponding to any [thick] concept, one can always isolate a genuine feature of the world [...] to be that

to which competent users of the concept are to be regarded as responding when they use it: that which is left in the world when one peels off the reflection of the appropriate attitude (McDowell 2001, 201).

Whatever our conclusion is concerning the debate between Hume, Hare and Blackburn on the one hand and McDowell and his followers on the other hand, the main point is that all parties agree that slurs are thick in the reductive sense. Even the followers of McDowell admit this. Later, we will see that the McDowell-style cognitivism has its followers in the study of slurs too. Christopher Hom and Robert May have proposed a view which utilises the entanglement of thickness. The view sympathises first and foremost with McDowell's point about understanding.

1.3.2 Descriptive and expressive content

Gottlob Frege's distinction between *sense* and *reference* is well known. He thought that although 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' have the same reference, the planet Venus, they differ in their sense. The mode of presentation (of the same reference) is different. Consider the pair

(14) Phosphorus is Phosphorus.

(15) Hesperus is Phosphorus.

(14) is trivially true and (15), although true, is not trivially true. The different senses of 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' can explain the cognitive significance of (15). There are two important points. First is that the sense of an expression determines the reference of the expression. Second point is that expressions with different senses are not apt for *salva veritate* substitution in all sentential contexts, even if they refer to the same object. Consider the pair

(16) Max believes that Hesperus visible in the evening sky.

(17) Max believes that Phosphorus visible in the evening sky.

It might be that Max does not know that ‘Phosphorus’ refers the same planet Venus as ‘Hesperus’ does. Hence, Max does not believe that Phosphorus is visible in the evening sky and the upshot is that co-extensive expressions with different senses are not substitutable in any given context. Propositional attitude reports like (16) and (17) make this clear.

In contrast to this, Frege also distinguishes *tone* of an expression from its sense and reference. The tone (or colouring)¹⁰ is something that does not alter the meaning. According to Frege, ‘walk’, ‘stroll’ and ‘saunter’ all mean the same, i.e. they have the same sense (and hence the same reference). They differ only in tone. Frege gives an example of a pejorative term ‘cur’ which has the same sense as ‘dog’. He thinks that the pair

(18) that dog howled the whole night.

(19) that cur howled the whole night.

express the same thought. Their descriptive content is the same. Hence, the truth conditional contribution of these words has to be the same. This points to a conclusion that expressions with the same sense but with different tones are *salva veritate* substitutable (Frege 1980, 140; see also Dummett 1973, 82-90; Neale 1999; Predelli 2013, 96-97.)

Timothy Williamson’s work on slurs is directly based on the distinction between sense and tone. Williamson thinks the distinction between sense and tone can be explicated with conventional implicature. David Kaplan also takes seriously Frege’s suggestion that the tone does not affect the truth conditions. His work is a major influence for contemporary non-cognitivism concerning expressives. Joseph A. Hedger’s treatment of slurs is a continuance of Kaplan’s view. Also Christopher Potts, Eric Mcready and Robin Jeshion adhere to Kaplan’s insight that derogation is truth conditionally irrelevant. Finally, the most detailed continuance of Kaplan’s ideas is Stefano Predelli’s work.

¹⁰Frege’s original German terms were ‘Färbung’ and ‘Beleuch’. Dummett translates the notion as ‘tone’ but the term ‘colouring’ is also used (see e.g. Picardi 2007, 491-520 and Neale 1999, 35-82).

1.4 Taxonomies

The discussed views are the following:

- A. Pure expressivism
- B. Pure descriptivism
- C. Moderate expressivism
- D. Moderate descriptivism
- E. Generic descriptivism

The views are discussed in relation to two dimensions which are interrelated but which, for illustrative purposes, are separated in this section. Both of these dimensions relate to the discussion on cognitivism and non-cognitivism. The dimensions are

- 1. Derogation-semantics dimension
- 2. Descriptivism-expressivism dimension

1.4.1 Derogation and semantics

Figure 1.1 categorises the views on the basis of semantics they adhere to. Specifically, the distinguishing point is how derogation is spelled out. The explanation for Figure 1.1 is the following. Pure views hold that

<u>Pure views</u>		<u>Moderate views</u>		Generic Descriptivism
Pure Expressivism	Pure Descriptivism	Moderate Expressivism	Moderate Descriptivism	

Figure 1.1: The influence of derogation on semantics

derogation influences truth conditions. Namely, pure views assign different truth conditions for the pair

- (20) Max is German.
- (21) Max is a Boche.

Hence, it can be said that pure views hold that derogation in (21) influences the truth conditions of the sentence. This means that a truth conditional treatment can spell out derogation.

Moderate views, on the other hand, hold that truth conditions for (20) and (21) are the same. So derogation cannot be spelled out with truth conditions. Still, moderate views hold that the nature of derogation is semantic. In order to spell out derogation, moderate views expand the notion of semantics beyond mere truth conditional semantics. Finally, generic descriptivism is my proposal. Generic descriptivism holds that the nature of derogation is not semantic. That is why derogation does not influence semantics. Crucially, I agree with moderate views that derogation does not affect truth conditions. Rather, the nature of derogation is epistemic. More detailed explanation of views from A to D is offered below. First, I will specify how each view accounts for derogation semantically. Then I will move on to descriptivism-expressivism dimension. In these explanations, generic descriptivism is omitted as Section 1.5 below will be devoted to the introduction of my view.

Pure expressivism

Joseph A. Hedger's pure expressivism posits a strong tie between derogation and truth conditional semantics as he argues that slurs are pure expressives. In a sentence

(22) Snow is white.

snow is described as white. That means that the sentence is true iff snow actually is white. In comparison, slurring sentences are not like this, according to pure expressivism. Slurring sentences do not describe the target in any way. Slurs are more comparable to an expression like 'ouch'. Hence, a slurring sentence like

(23) Max is a Frog.

is comparable to a sentence

(24) Max is ouch.

which may not even be a well-formed sentence; it certainly does not attribute any property to Max and that is why it is not a truth-apt statement. The same goes for the slurring expression. It does not succeed in attributing any property to Max. In this sense, pure expressivism takes the Humean road. Hume argued that a thick concept like CRIME does not state factual matters. Similarly, pure expressivism denies the descriptive component in slurring terms. That is why slurs are not truth-apt at all. The upshot is that derogation of slurs seeps down to semantics and derogation robs the slurring utterance of truth value.

Pure descriptivism

Pure descriptivism posits an equally strong tie between derogation and truth conditional semantics but in a different way. The main strand of pure descriptivism is Christopher Hom and Robert May's view. They argue that derogation is based on morally questionable (stereotypical) properties such as "Frogs are vulgar". Slurs then capture these stereotypes as their content. The content of 'Frog' is riddled with lots of mistaken and, not to mention, morally offensive stereotypical descriptions. The content of 'Frog', according to Hom, is something like

Ought to be placed in one of the lesser tables in restaurant because of being vulgar all because of being French.

For one thing, there is the mistake that it is alright to treat French badly and the other mistake is to think that the property of vulgarity is somehow inherent in the French. Because of this kind of characterisation, the reference of 'Frog' is empty. Hence, slurring utterances are always false. This brief presentation of pure descriptivism is enough to show the connection with McDowell's entanglement challenge as pure descriptivism argues that moral evaluation in slurs influences the extension of slurs.

I will be considering also another form of pure descriptivism, Michael Dummett's inferentialist treatment of slurs. His view is a weaker form of pure descriptivism. One of the core claims of pure descriptivism is that there is something wrong with the meaning of slurs. Dummett argues

that even though slurs are not systematically false, they produce dubious inferential patterns. Furthermore, he equates the inferential patterns with meaning. This then naturally leads to the conclusion that there is something dubious about the meaning of slurs.

Moderate expressivism

Moderate views hold that the slurring terms and their neutral counterparts are co-referential. So moderate views deny that the derogatory part of a slur influences *truth conditional* semantics but the views still hold that derogation affects the meaning of slurs. Christopher Potts' conventional implicature strategy and Stefano Predelli's 'Kaplanian' view accommodate the two claims by imposing semantics which is rich enough to handle non-truth conditional content.

Christopher Potts' moderate expressivism is based on conventional implicature. The central feature of conventional implicatures is that even false implicatures do not falsify the truth conditional content of the original statements. In order to explicate this point, Potts proposes an expansion of the semantic *domain* which incorporates the expressive content into semantics in a way that semantics respects the *independence property*. He introduces new non-truth functional, expressive types. As a consequence, the truth functional and the expressive dimension do not mingle with each other. That is, they are independent of each other but both are incorporated into the formalisation of expressives.

Moderate descriptivism

One part of moderate descriptivism is Stefano Predelli's Kaplanian development. On the kaplanian frame, the notion of logical validity is extended in the sense that the basis of validity is not truth but the notion of semantic information. In general, a valid inference is an inference which carries the truth of the premises to the conclusion. On the Kaplanian framework, inferences transmit semantic information from the premises to the conclusion. Following Kaplan, Predelli distinguishes two notions of valid-

ity: *truth functional validity* and *expressive validity*. The transmission of semantic information is captured with these two notions of validity.

The other part of moderate descriptivism is Timothy Williamson's conventional implicature strategy. Williamson does not extend the notion of semantics (in any technical sense) but agrees that derogation is part of the meaning and can be made explicit with conventional implicature. The stereotypical information of 'Frog' produces a conventional implicature:

(25) French are vulgar.

which is false and abusive. According to Williamson, the implicature that slurs like 'Frog' produce are part of their meaning, in the broad sense. He explicates this by saying that if a speaker is ignorant about the implicature concerning 'Boche', then the speaker is at least partly ignorant of the *meaning* of 'Boche'. (Williamson 2009, 152-153.) I will explore the notions of meaning and stereotype in greater detail next.

1.4.2 Meaning

The meaning of an expression relates to the understanding of that expression. Semantics provides the means to explicate that meaning. Semantics aims to respect the notion of *compositionality*. That is, the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meaning of the constituent parts. Two notions of semantics are relevant:

1. Truth conditional semantics
2. Expanded semantics.

Pure views adhere to truth conditional semantics and hold that derogation can be explicated with truth conditional semantics. Moderate views adhere to expanded semantics. They hold that derogation cannot be explicated with truth conditional semantics. Rather, it can be explicated with the help of the expanded notion of semantics. Potts and Predelli each have their own methods of expanding semantics. Potts proposes a conventional implicature strategy which expands the domain of semantics

with new types. The crucial point is that there are no truth functional operations over these types. Predelli takes his cue from Kaplan and proposes that derogation does not affect the truth conditional meaning. Rather, it affects the use of slurs and proposes a semantic method to explicate this.

Williamson and Dummett add complications to this picture but the distinction can still accommodate their views. Dummett thinks that the meaning of a given term is first and foremost identified with the inferential patterns related to the term. As a consequence, the inferential patterns produced by the slurring term do affect the truth conditions of that term. Williamson, on the other hand, holds that the differences between the slurring term and the neutral term are truth conditionally irrelevant but still he holds that derogation is a part of the meaning of a slur in a broader sense. Because of this, I think that Williamson should be categorised as a proponent of expanded semantics.

1.4.3 Role of stereotype

The main issue with the stereotype is whether the negative stereotype associated with a social group contributes to derogation. The views are categorised to those which recognise the role of stereotype in derogation and to those which do not. Figure 1.2 below illustrates the situation. I will first elaborate the notion of stereotype and then I will briefly characterise the attitude of each view towards the stereotype.

<u>No</u>		<u>Yes</u>		
Pure Expressivism	Moderate Expressivism	Generic Descriptivism	Moderate Descriptivism	Pure Descriptivism

Figure 1.2: Is the stereotype a part of derogation?

Target and stereotype

One of the major themes is the nature of descriptive content. There are two components to descriptive content:

- (i) Target

(ii) Stereotype

The target of the expression is fairly clear. It has been claimed so far that derogation targets a specific social group. For example, ‘Boche’ targets the German, ‘Limey’ targets the English and ‘Frog’ targets the French.

In the course of the argumentation, my main claim is that the stereotype is responsible for derogation. However, the stereotype is not the easiest notion to capture. *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) says that a stereotype is “a preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation, etc.”. *Cambridge Online Dictionary* (COD) says that a stereotype is “a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong”. Finally according to *Urban Dictionary* (UD), “a stereotype is used to categorize a group of people”.¹¹ All these entries contribute to the way I see the stereotype. I view it as an over-simplification of the characteristics of social kinds, as OED suggests. Thereby, it can be misleading as COD hints and, from Urban Dictionary, I take it that the function of a stereotype is to categorise individuals into groups. There is an important distinction to be made on the basis of the definitions. The definitions provided by OED and COD apply just to social kinds as they highlight the over-simplification and the wrongness of the characterisation that the stereotype contains. The characterisation in Urban Dictionary covers all stereotypes, whether the stereotype applies to a social, a natural or a biological kind. It is a key point that only in the case of social kinds, the over-simplification is in some way harmful. Putnam, for instance, argues that stereotypes are an important way to pass on information about natural kinds. According to him, a stereotype can be equated with a description. He says of a stereotype that it is

a standardised description of features of the kind that are typical, or ‘normal’, or at any rate stereotypical. The cen-

¹¹The entries are from online dictionaries and they are as follows:
OED: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/189956?rskey=LrcN7z>
COD: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stereotype>
UD: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=stereotype>

tral features of the stereotype generally are criteria - features which in normal situations constitute ways of recognizing if a thing belongs to the kind or, at least, necessary conditions (or probabilistic necessary conditions) for membership in the kind. (Putnam 1975, 230.)

In short, stereotypes have an important role in passing on information about natural kinds. Because of the stereotypes of gold (it is yellow, shiny, precious metal), the linguistic community can recognise gold and for this reason the stereotype is useful. In this sense, there is a stark contrast with the stereotypes of natural and even biological kinds and the stereotypes of social kinds. The stereotype of social kinds have very little to do with the recognition of a specific kind. Rather, the stereotypes of social kinds are over-simplifications and there is something wrong with them. Putnam elaborates his idea of stereotype:

In ordinary parlance a ‘stereotype’ is a conventional (frequently malicious) idea (which may be wildly inaccurate) of what an X looks like or acts like or is. Obviously, I am trading on some features of the ordinary parlance. I am not concerned with malicious stereotypes (save where the language itself is malicious); but I am concerned with conventional ideas, which may be inaccurate. I am suggesting that just such a conventional idea is associated with ‘tiger’, with ‘gold’, etc. [...] (Putnam 1975, 249-250.)

Putnam says that he trades off the “malicious” nature of the stereotype but leaves the inaccuracy as it is.¹² It seems to me that his idea is that a stereotype is crucial in passing on information about natural kinds in a linguistic community, even if that stereotype is in fact inaccurate.¹³ In a similar spirit, my idea is that a competent speaker knows that ‘Frog’ comes

¹²The idea that a stereotype can be inaccurate has been pointed out by Williamson (2009, 137-158).

¹³His example is again gold. A stereotype of gold is that it is yellow but, according to Putnam, this stereotype is inaccurate as pure gold is white. It is the impurities (namely, copper) that make gold yellow. (Putnam 1975, 250.)

with a stereotype of vulgarity or that ‘Boche’ comes with the stereotype of cruelty. The idea of a xenophobic stereotype can be characterised in probabilistic terms. A stereotype characterises a normal member of a kind and in this sense, a xenophobe believes that if someone has vulgar eating habits and slurps red wine at noon, then there is a high probability that the person is a ‘Frog’.¹⁴

Pure expressivism

Pure expressivism does not recognise the role of a stereotype in the semantics of slurs. Hedger argues that slurs are pure expressives. So they do not have any descriptive content. Hence, they cannot express any stereotypical characters either. Slurs do not describe the stereotype of the target.

Moderate expressivism

Moderate expressivism also denies the role of stereotype. Moderate expressivism holds that slurs have a *dual content*. The content of a slur is partly expressive and partly descriptive. Moderate expressivism is a very faithful follower of Hare’s reductive view. Moderate expressivism holds that, on the one hand, slurs have descriptive content in the sense that they refer to what ever their neutral counterparts refer to but, on the other hand, slurs add an ‘boo’ attitude towards the target.

Hence, moderate expressivism accepts (i) but denies (ii). Potts introduces a whole host of properties that relate and contribute to the idea of expressive independence. Potts’ most direct argument against stereotypes is *descriptive ineffability*. Potts argues that since competent speakers cannot paraphrase the descriptive content of expressives, the descriptive content cannot be taken seriously as an explanatory notion. (Potts 2007, 176-179.)

Concerning slurs, Robin Jeshion makes a similar point. She says that bigotry and racism are rooted simply in finding others different (Jeshion

¹⁴Putnam’s thoughts on stereotypes are further discussed in Chapter 5.

2013, 322). Xenophobia is not based on specific stereotypes.

Moderate descriptivism

Moderate descriptivism recognises the role of stereotype in derogation. Timothy Williamson proposes an interesting variation of the conventional implicature strategy, extending it to moderate descriptivism. Moderate expressivism claims that the implicature produced by the use of ‘Frog’ is

(26) ‘Boo’ the French.

The notable thing is the absence of the stereotype. There is only the disrespectful attitude towards the target. Contrary to this, Williamson thinks that the stereotype

(27) The French are vulgar.

is a part of the implicature. Williamson thinks that while the statement

(28) Max is a Frog.

is true iff Max is French, the implicature that the French are vulgar is not only abusive but also false. Williamson says that since the false implicature (27) does not falsify slurring (28), the implicature is not a logical entailment of (28). (Williamson 2009, 149.)

Another moderate descriptivist discussed is Stefano Predelli. His general view is to some extent compatible with moderate expressivism. He thinks that slurs express a subjective attitude towards the target. However, he incorporates the idea of a stereotype with a *semantic witness* of an expressive. The semantic witness explicates the stereotype involved with the subjective attitude towards the target. Most importantly, the witness does it in a truth conditional manner. For example, the semantic witness of ‘Frog’ is something like “the speaker regards the French as vulgar”. There are then two aspects to (28). The first aspect is that (28) is true iff Max is French and the other aspect is explicated with the semantic witness. The use of (28) is correct (or non-defective in Predelli’s terms) iff it is true that the speaker regards the French as vulgar.¹⁵

¹⁵This is a simple version of Predelli’s idea and it is elaborated in Chapter 4.

Pure descriptivism

Pure descriptivism relies heavily on the notion of stereotype. Pure descriptivism holds that the negative moral evaluation influences the extension of a slur like ‘Frog’. According to Hom and May, the content of ‘Frog’ is filled with xenophobic stereotypes: “the French are vulgar” and so on but no one is vulgar just because they belong to a certain social group. Hence, ‘Frog’ does not refer to anything. This then explains the difference in the truth values of the pair (20) and (21). Depending how things actually are (20) can be either true or false but the slurring term in (21) makes the sentence systematically false. There are no German people who are cruel because they are German. Whether Max actually is German or not, is an irrelevant question.

1.5 Generic descriptivism

1.5.1 Big picture

The core claims of generic descriptivism can be listed in the following way:

- (A) Slurs have the same truth-conditional meaning as their neutral counterparts.
- (B) Derogation is truth conditionally irrelevant.
- (C) Derogation is based on an epistemic stance towards the target.
- (D) The stance is based on an unwarranted formation of negative beliefs about the target.
- (E) Slurs transmit unwarranted and stereotypical conceptions of the target.

In my view, truth conditional semantics is enough to explain the meaning of slurs. Namely, with truth conditional semantics, it can be established that the differences between the slurring term and the neutral term are truth conditionally irrelevant. Since I think that truth conditional semantics is enough to explain the meaning of slurs, I argue that derogation does

not affect the meaning. I argue that the nature of derogation is epistemic, not semantic. Slurs are expressions of unwarranted negative beliefs. The beliefs are over-generalisations (or over-simplifications, as OED says it). My view aims to accommodate the idea that slurs are expressions of xenophobia and as such they transmit xenophobia. Just because the expressed beliefs are unwarranted and negative over-generalisations, they are derogatory. The epistemic stance towards the target is the reason to use a slur. However, this stance can be very idiosyncratic. The speaker might think that stereotypically ‘Frogs’ are thieves because the speaker just noticed that a French-speaking person shoplifted something. From that incident, the speaker generalised that all French people are shoplifters. So when that speaker uses the term ‘Frog’, the speaker aims to express that belief. However, when the term ‘Frog’ is used, the transmitted information is the conventional stereotype that ‘Frogs’ are vulgar.

I will elaborate these claims more below. First, I will discuss the claims in relation to the derogation-semantics and the descriptivism-expressivism dimensions and then I will proceed to detailed analysis of the claims.

Derogation and semantics

One of the most important claims I make is that derogation is not semantic. Generic descriptivism adheres to the moderate view that the slurring term and the neutral term are co-referential. That means that generic descriptivism is at odds with the pure views which hold that the extension of the slurring term diverges from the neutral term. According to pure expressivism, the slurring term does not have an extension at all and pure descriptivism says that the extension is empty. In addition, there is a contrast to moderate views as generic descriptivism does not adhere to any sort extension of semantics. Moderate views hold that in order to accommodate the behaviour of slurs, the notion of semantics needs to be extended. Specifically, the semantic apparatus needs to incorporate the expressive dimension in a non-truth functional way. Generic descriptivism disagrees. It holds that truth conditional semantics is an exhaustive explanation of the *meaning* of slurs. Since generic descriptivism adheres to

the conjunction of two things:

- (i) the slurring term and the neutral term are co-referential
- (ii) truth conditions are an exhaustive explanation of semantics,

it entails that generic descriptivism holds that

- (iii) the derogatory feature does not affect the semantics of the slurring words.

One way to summarise the point of this work is that it aims to purge the meaning of slurs from any derogation. That is why generic descriptivism has its own entry in figure 1.1.

Role of stereotype

Figure 1.2 characterises the role of stereotype. On this scale, generic descriptivism accepts both components of the descriptive content: the target and the stereotype. In this respect, moderate descriptivism is the closest ally to generic descriptivism. Just like moderate descriptivism, generic descriptivism holds that the truth conditional content of a slur is the target, and both hold that the stereotypes are responsible for derogation. However, both deny that stereotypes are part of the truth conditional content. The claims of generic descriptivism can be summarised as

- (i) The referent of a slur is the target.
- (ii) Stereotypes are responsible for derogation.

However, generic descriptivism has affinities with pure descriptivism too. Pure descriptivism denies the expressive dimension altogether, at least in any explanatory sense. Pure descriptivism adopts the cognitivist view on thickness in order to explain derogation. That means that they deny that the expressive dimension has explanatory relevance. The derogatory feature of slurs is part of the descriptive dimension. Generic descriptivism also holds that the linguistic evidence for the expressive nature of slurs is *mainly* inconclusive.

1.5.2 Fine print

Although we can see some of the main differences already in the big picture, it is really the small print that gives generic descriptivism its unique character. The previously introduced claims reflect mainly contrast with other views. In the following, generic descriptivism is characterised in its own right.

Cognitive and epistemic differences

According to generic descriptivism, the truth conditional content of any given slur is the target. The content of the slurring term and its neutral counterpart is the same. That means that derogation is not part of the *truth conditional* content. Generic descriptivism does not think that we need to accommodate the expressive dimension with an extension to non-truth conditional semantics. Rather, generic descriptivism sees derogation as an epistemic feature.

Potts lists six properties that are distinctive to expressives. However, It is held here that the evidence for the expressive dimension is not convincing as almost all of the properties mentioned and discussed by Potts can be given an equally plausible explanation of another kind. It is shown that only the so-called *perspective dependence* is a genuine sign of the expressive dimension. In other words, generic descriptivism concedes that as far as perspective dependence is concerned, expressivism has a point but even this can be explained in broadly cognitivist terms. The perspective dependence is explained as a property of negative and biased beliefs that accompany the use of slurs.

Slurs and generic information

According to my proposal, all of the features of slurs mentioned so far can be explained with the information which accompanies slurs. It is claimed that slurs come with stereotypical and mostly negative information and this information is the key to derogation. The eponymous feature of generic descriptivism is the claim that

Slurs contain generic information.

The description of the psychological mechanism which produces generic information is the first step in revealing the cognitive status of the information associated with slurs. The psychological mechanism is based on distinction between surface features and deeper features. We recognise kinds (whether biological or social) on the basis of distinctive surface features and then posit some other deeper features to the kind on the basis some individuals of that kind. It is claimed that sentences like

(29) Tigers are striped.

(30) Ducks lay eggs.

are based on this sort of generalisation. Sarah-jane Leslie hypothesises that there are qualifications on the features. She thinks that the surface features have to be distinguishable in some way. She also thinks that the deeper feature has to be striking or even horrific in order to get generalised across the kind. I grant that this mechanism works rather well in the case of biological kinds. The generalisation

(31) Tigers are ferocious.

seems sensible and it continues to be sensible when we attribute (on the basis previous encounters) the ‘ferociousness’ to a sleeping tiger. It is sensible even in the case the tiger is not sleeping but dead. In this case, even though we make a mistake, it does not seem like a big mistake. “Better safe than sorry”, you might say. A more controversial claim is that this mechanism can produce generalisations about social kinds and such generalisations can lead to pernicious effects, for example prejudice and xenophobia.

It is important to connect the above view with the previous discussion about the stereotypes of natural kinds. If you are looking for gold and you find something that satisfies many of the stereotypes (is yellow, is shiny and is metal), the probabilities for (literally) striking gold are high. In similar sense, xenophobes think that if someone satisfies many of the stereotypes of ‘Frog’, drinks red wine inappropriately early and eats disgusting things, there is high probability that that person is a ‘Frog’. The

inferences, of course, goes the other way round too. If someone is a ‘Frog’, then the previous features come with the package.

Slurs and negative information

It has been noted that generic statements about social groups are often accompanied by negative attitudes, more negative than specific statements about the individual members of the same group. In this light, it is not a surprise that the stereotypes concerning social groups are also often negative. I can think of at least two reasons for this. First, the stereotypes often involve evaluative attributions and some of these evaluations can also be positive. But since they are evaluative, the xenophobes are able to put a negative spin even on the good attributions. For example, the Chinese are stereotypically smart but for a xenophobe this means that ‘Chinks’ are devious or sneaky. Secondly, the negative information involved with stereotypes and with generic statements (or indeed generic beliefs) can be, at least partially, explained with the postulated psychological mechanism. The thought is that the generalised feature is somehow striking and what is more striking than some negative feature. This thought is supported by studies on emotions and attention. The features to which we have strong emotional response are more likely to catch our attention. Concerning social kinds, the sad truth is that by far our strongest emotions are negative: fear, anger, contempt. In this work, I will concentrate on the second reason and investigate that in detail.

Emotions and attention

The studies on the connection between emotions and attention support the claim that our attention is guided by our emotions. Fear draws our attention to a bear’s claws and sharp teeth instead of its cute bobtail. This is old news but this is also true in the case of social kinds. So if someone has a strong moral stand against stealing, he or she much more likely focuses on an act of, say, shoplifting than on an act of generosity when encountering a social kind that is different from his or her own.

At the same time, this ‘striking’ feature (i.e. striking *for him or her*) is quickly generalised across the whole kind.

Cognitivism - non-cognitivism debate

There are two reasons why generic descriptivism has a non-cognitivist outlook. First, the cognitivism – non-cognitivism debate revolves a lot around the entanglement point which is denied by generic descriptivism. The reductive analysis of slurring terms is not only achievable but probable: The extension of a slur is one thing and derogation is another. This is only to be expected from a view that aims to purge derogation from semantics. The upshot is that generic descriptivism resides firmly on the non-cognitivist side concerning the truth conditional aspect of the debate.

Secondly, one of the big philosophical themes concerning emotions is the rationality or irrationality of emotions. It has often been said that emotional judgement is the opposite of rational judgement and that they are the hallmark of non-cognitivism. But recent literature on emotions emphasises that emotions are a part of rational deliberation processes, i.e. they are an essential part of the cognitive machinery. Emotions help us to make quick decisions in a hostile environment. When we see a ticking time bomb it is better to run than to stay and deliberate the best possible action through a painstaking process. Fear of exploding to pieces makes us ditch the deliberation process and run. At the same time, it seems obvious that after the painstaking deliberation process the best possible action is to run away anyway. So emotions can enter into our rational deliberation process in a beneficial way. This is why recent literature suggests that emotions should count as a part of the rational processes. It is granted here that in the right conditions these cognitive processes are rational but, at the same time, xenophobia clearly shows that sometimes they are not. In other words, the cognitive machinery might be working just fine and yet the machinery produces xenophobia. However, xenophobia is not rational. This is another sense that this work aims at a non-cognitivist outlook.

To sum up the two points, one could present an analogy. The use of

slurs might reveal the user's negative biased beliefs about the target and these biases are not rational. In fact, they are mistaken. In this sense, they resemble the wrong answer to the 'Linda the bank teller' question.¹⁶ Because of the elaborate background story people tend to choose the conjunctive answer which is not the most probable answer. The machinery of generalisation can produce similar mistakes which count as genuine cognitive differences. However, these differences do not show on a semantic level. Just like the participants in the 'Linda the bank teller' experiments are not confused about Linda's identity, xenophobes are *not* confused about the identity of 'Frogs'. It seems pretty clear that they know that 'Frogs' are French. Albeit, they might have weird and false beliefs *about* French people. Just like the participants in the experiments have false beliefs *about* Linda.

However, there is a cognitivist aspect to this work. The contrast between non-cognitivism and cognitivism which is developed here could be put forward in the following way. The non-cognitivist claim is something like:

Slurs are expressions of xenophobic *attitudes*.

Whereas, the claim of generic descriptivism could be put forward as

Slurs are expressions of xenophobic *thoughts*.

Generic descriptivism claims that the use of slurs can reveal genuine *cognitive* differences which non-cognitivism denies. The difference stems from the way stereotypes are incorporated to the account. With the help of stereotypes, generic descriptivism can say that the xenophobes *think* of the target in a different way. Furthermore, I claim that the view on slurs should reflect these differences.

¹⁶Here is one version of the question:

Linda studied sociology at LSE. She reads the Guardian, is a member of the Labour Party, and enjoys experimental theatre. Which of these is more probable?

(A) Linda is a bank teller.

(B) Linda is a bank teller and an active feminist.

(See Papineau 2006, 42; see also Tversky and Kahneman 1982, 84-98.)

Affiliation with originalism

The final point with generic descriptivism is its affiliation with Mark Sainsbury and Michael Tye's originalism. The main and eponymous point in originalism is that concepts are individuated by their origin. Concepts are not individuated by their content¹⁷ as Millians suggest nor by their sense as Fregeans suggest. Originalism denies senses but admits the so-called Fregean data which means trouble for Millians. That is why originalism claims that concepts are not individuated by their content but instead by their origin. This move explains Fregean data related to concepts. For example, Frege thought that 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' are co-extensional but they have different senses. Originalism also denies two-level semantics. There is no room for senses. Instead, originalism holds that the difference between 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' are explained with different origins.

Senses are sometimes equated with definitions and these definitions then determine the content. For example, bachelor is an unmarried man. Originalism does admit that concepts come with information but, according to originalism, the information attached to the concept and the content of a concept live separate lives. The Fregean claim is that a competent language user has to know that a bachelor is an unmarried man. Originalism does not believe so. According to originalism, the content is fixed in the origin and after that the concept starts to accumulate information around it but this information does not have anything to do with the content, except that the information usually is *about* the content. Generic descriptivism does not have a strong opinion on concept individuation but it agrees with the two previous points. According to generic descriptivism, there is only one level of semantics, truth functional. That is part of the purging programme.

¹⁷From now on, 'content' refers to Millian conception of content, i.e. to the referent of the expression. This makes content somewhat synonymous with the *semantic value* of an expression.

1.5.3 Scope of generic descriptivism

There are two important aspects in the application of generic descriptivism. First, my view holds that derogation involves the ethnic background of the target. An important part of the view is xenophobia. Not only does generic descriptivism apply to the most obvious racist slurs, but also to slurs which are based on ethnic background in general, specifically on nationality and religion. In my view, all racist slurs are at least partly based on xenophobia but not the other way round. It seems to me that the physical or the geographical distance is not so much a factor in xenophobia. You can be xenophobic towards your neighbour with her strange customs, attire or language. In general, it is the strangeness of your neighbour's appearance that triggers xenophobia. Xenophobia, in a sense, is a tendency to react strongly to an appearance or a behaviour which does not confirm with the subject's expectations how people should look or behave. Racism comes after this. Racism is an 'ism', an ideology that is meant to justify the xenophobic thoughts about your neighbour (solely on the basis of the ethnic background). It is an ideology which explains that some groups of people are inferior to you and they deserve to be treated differently but not all xenophobes are racist. It is true that some xenophobes adopt a racist ideology to justify their thoughts about their different neighbours, but not all. Most importantly, the slurring language does not require the adoption of racism. The slurring language may well be explained with xenophobia. Furthermore, the British who use the term 'Frog' are not basing derogation on race. Presumably, the British and the French are of the same race; whatever the definition of race is.

At the same time, a view that takes xenophobia to be the basis of the slurring language can well accommodate religious slurs. Concerning religion, the trigger to xenophobia can be the strange religious customs and traditions. As a result, the current view allows a rather wide range of application, ranging from racist slurs to religious slurs.

The second aspect is that my view holds that slurs transmit conventional and stereotypical information about the target. This allows to widen the scope of application. Slurs transmit negative information about

the target but this information is not a part of the (truth conditional) meaning of slurs. Rather, the nature of the information is epistemic. Slurs express the speaker's negative thoughts and beliefs about the target. This mechanism of spreading negative information applies not only to ethnic slurs but also to homophobic slurs and slurs based on gender.

1.6 Structure of the work

There are two possible candidates for the source of derogation. As a reminder, they are

- (i) expressive content
- (ii) stereotype

It would seem highly implausible that anyone suggested that the target is the source of derogation. That would make the neutral term offensive too. The views discussed oscillate between these sources of derogation. However, the other important aspect is semantics. In fact, the general exposition follows Figure 1.1. The general plot is the purging operation. The story begins with the two views which posit the thickest relationship between derogation and semantics and then proceeds to purging derogation from semantics. When the generic descriptivism is finally reached, the derogatory influence on semantics is diluted to minimum.

Pure Expressivism

The first part of Chapter 2 investigates the possibility of pure expressivism. The chapter discusses Joseph A. Hedger's thinking. According to him, slurs do not have descriptive content at all. Hence, slurring sentences are not truth-apt. They do not have truth value while a corresponding sentence with a neutral term is evaluated in terms of truth and falsity. Following Adam Croom, I will present linguistic evidence which suggest that Hedger is wrong. Contrary to Hedger's claim, slurs do have descriptive content.

Pure descriptivism

In the second part of Chapter 2, pure descriptivism is discussed. I will begin the discussion with Hom and May's version of pure descriptivism. There are three main points about Hom and May's pure descriptivism. It denies the expressive dimension altogether and it explains derogation through the stereotypes. Finally, pure descriptivism explains derogation by truth conditional means. Slurring statements are systematically false. The upshot of the discussion is that Hom and May's descriptivism is inconsistent with the presented linguistic evidence. The inconsistencies in the face of the linguistic evidence suggest that Hom and May's pure descriptivism cannot explain the *understanding* of slurs.

I will proceed to discuss another form of pure descriptivism, Michael Dummett's inferentialist approach. He argues that while slurring terms are not systematically false, there still is something wrong with the *meaning* of slurs. His argument goes that abusive terms like slurs produce non-harmonious inferential patterns. They allow inferences that do not carry the warrants from the premises to the conclusions. Hence, slurs are *defective* concepts. But as Williamson's objection shows, even the lighter version of pure descriptivism is inconsistent in the face of linguistic evidence. The conclusion drawn from this is that slurs cannot be defective concepts, not in the sense that Dummett intends them to be.

Facts over morality

One way to put the findings at this point is that facts concerning the use of slurs trumps the moral stand against xenophobia. Admittedly, Hedger's, Hom and May's and even Dummett's intentions are good. They argue that there is something wrong with the *meaning* of slurs. Thereby, they argue either directly (as Hom and May do) or hint (like Dummett does) that xenophobes are less competent language users than civilised people are. As tempting as this conclusion is, I will deny the claim. There is nothing wrong with the semantics of slurs. Slurs are co-extensional with their neutral counterparts. As it is shown, this is the most compelling

way to explain the *understanding* of slurs.

Moderate expressivism

Moderate expressivism is non-cognitivism *par excellence*. The underlying point in moderate expressivism is that the truth conditional content of slurs is the target but that content comes with ‘boo’ attitude. Hence moderate expressivism subscribes to (i) but it denies (ii). Potts denies (ii) because, according to him, people just do not know the stereotypes of slurs. The ignorance is manifested as ineffability. Potts says that slurs are descriptively ineffable which is typical for expressives in general. The speaker’s inability to paraphrase slurs is the main reason why moderate descriptivism denies stereotypes.

However, I do not think the argument from ineffability is conclusive evidence against stereotypes, at least in the case of slurs. It is granted that in the case of pure expressives such as ‘damn’ or ‘bastard’, the descriptive content might be ineffable because it could be very well argued that there is not any descriptive content to pure expressives. Nevertheless, even moderate expressivism holds that slurs have descriptive content, namely the target. At the same time, it is argued here that there is, at least, a moderate consensus about stereotypical characters conveyed by slurs. Besides this, I will proceed to a much bolder claim. A xenophobic slurring speaker can attribute very idiosyncratic stereotypes to the target and those stereotypes contribute to derogation. At first sight, this seems to contradict the *automony* claim presented earlier. Generic descriptivism resolves the matter with its affinity with originalism. The speaker does not need to know a specific definition to be a competent user. According to generic descriptivism, the speaker knows a lot: he or she knows the target and the speaker knows that he or she can express his or her xenophobic thoughts with slurs. So when we look at things more carefully, we can see that the contrast between moderate expressivism and generic descriptivism holds. Moderate expressivism says that slurs are expressions of xenophobic *attitudes* while generic descriptivism can still hold that xenophobes *think about* the target in a derogatory way, even if

that way of thinking is idiosyncratic.

This idea is made more explicit with a contrast to Robin Jeshion's moderate expressivism. She also denies that stereotypes contribute to derogation. She holds that xenophobia is first and foremost an *attitude* towards the target. But I will show that the evidence that she gives for this view is not convincing. At any rate, generic descriptivism can account for her examples better.

Moderate descriptivism

Moderate descriptivism includes the views of Predelli and Williamson. First, Williamson continues his dialogue with Dummett's inferentialism and then Predelli's Kaplan-inspired proposal is introduced. Both views hold that the truth functional content is the target. At the same time and in contrast to moderate expressivism, both views hold that the stereotype contributes to derogation.

Generic descriptivism

The nature of derogation cannot explain the differences between moderate descriptivism and generic descriptivism for the simple reason that they both hold the same combination. The (truth functional) content of a slur is the target and there is an expressive element to slurs.¹⁸ Finally, the stereotype contributes to the expressive element. Hence, the stereotype contributes to derogation. Williamson's version could be even construed as a version of cognitivism. He argues that the outcome of using slurs such as 'Frog' is an implicature that

(32) The French are vulgar.

Hence, the implicature, at least, partially reveals that the user of 'Frog' *believes* that French are vulgar. However, Williamson denies that this is in any way central to his view. His thought is that the belief that French are

¹⁸Even though generic descriptivism claims that the evidence for expressive element is mostly inconclusive, generic descriptivism does admit that the use of slurs involve perspective dependence which is an expressive feature, according to Potts.

vulgar is just a by-product of the linguistic implicature. For Williamson slurs are first and foremost about the use of language. In other words, the study of slurs tells us something about language and how it works, not about the psychology of xenophobia.

Predelli has a similar background assumption. His study of slurs is specifically motivated by the interest in the relationship between truth functional validity and expressive validity. His interest lays in extending the semantic toolbox: to see how the expressive dimension can be incorporated to semantics. In this way, his motivation is in line with moderate expressivism. It is also clear that Kaplan's motivation is in the background. Kaplan says that in his "Ouch and Oops" he continues his long-time project of trying to unmask semantic truths in epistemological clothing. He illustrates this by saying that the connection between 'ouch' and "I am in pain" is purely semantic. I suspect that Predelli thinks that this holds for slurs and their semantic witnesses too. This work agrees; but just because there are no epistemic differences *between the slur 'Frog' and its semantic witness "the speaker holds that French are vulgar"* is precisely the reason to hold that there are epistemic differences *between a slur and its neutral counterpart*. Even though there are no semantic differences.

1.7 Summary

We can categorise the rival views as *pure views* and *moderate views*. There are things to learn from both camps, both good and bad. The good thing about pure views is that they tie the confusion of xenophobia to slurs but do this in the wrong way. According to my view, the badness of xenophobia does not affect the truth conditional semantics of slurs.

In my view, moderate views are right about the truth conditional semantics of slurs. A slur refers to whatever the neutral counterpart refers to. However, moderate views claim that the study of slurs reveals first and foremost something about language. According to Kaplan, his project is to show that seemingly epistemic differences between expressives and corresponding neutral expressions turn out to be semantic. My aim is

precisely the opposite. I aim to show that between semantically identical slurring terms and neutral counterparts there can be genuine epistemic differences. These epistemic differences also reveal the mistake behind the use slurs.

Chapter 2

PURE VIEWS

2.1 Pure expressivism

2.1.1 Hedger on slurs

In his “The Semantics of Racial Slurs” (2012), Joseph A. Hedger makes an interesting proposal concerning the semantics of ethnic slurs. As a starting point, Hedger makes a distinction between ‘asshole’ and ‘fucker’. According to him, the assertion

(33) My neighbour is an asshole.

has a descriptive content. It says that speaker’s neighbour is not a nice person. At the same time, it expresses the speaker’s contempt towards the neighbour (for being the a-hole that he is). ‘Fucker’, on the other hand, does not contribute in any descriptive way to the content of

(34) My neighbour is a fucker.

It merely expresses contempt towards the neighbour. In favour of an expressive reading, Hedger says:

[W]e have no basis for arguing with someone who utters [34]. We may feel that the speaker’s hostile attitude is not warranted, but we have nothing to say which is capable of demonstrating that the neighbour is not a fucker. This is because

‘fucker’ doesn’t describe the neighbour or say anything about him. (Hedger 2012, 76-78.)

As a result, the sentence does not have a truth value at all. Hedger wants to point out that there is “a sub-class of derogatory epithets which lack any descriptive content whatsoever” such as ‘fucker’. (Hedger 2012, 76-77.) Hedger goes on to argue that slurs belong to this sub-class too. Whether the specific contrast between ‘asshole’ and ‘fucker’ is accurate or not, it is interesting to see how Hedger makes his case for slurs.

One of the central features of slurs is their projection behaviour. This means that derogation projects out from the scope of truth conditional operators. Thus, it poses a challenge for the truth conditional semantics. For simplicity and brevity, I will discuss only negation at this stage.¹⁹ Consider the following:

- (35) Prince Charles is a Frog. No, Prince Charles is not a Frog.²⁰

Notice that the slurring effect is not cancelled by the negation. Even the negation remains offensive. It seems that the negation does not succeed in cancelling xenophobic language. The projection phenomenon suggests that slurs have an expressive component to them and thus it seems that they are not purely descriptive and hence they cannot be explained exhaustively with truth conditional semantics.

The projection behaviour is a stepping stone for Hedger. His example is the following pair:

- (36) a. Chirac is French.
b. Chirac is a Frog.

According to Hedger, these sentences differ in truth conditional meaning. Both sentences express a complete thought but only (36a) is true. Since the slurs in (36b) fails to describe Chirac in any way, it is not truth apt at all. In Hedger’s terms (36b) “fails to offer sufficient descriptive content to predicate anything of [Chirac]”. This view tries to accommodate the

¹⁹There is a detailed exposition of projection and related features of expressives in Chapter 3.

²⁰The example is borrowed from Mark Richard (2008, 12-13).

thought that civilised people wish to condemn the content expressed by (36b) and refuse to agree with it. (Hedger 2012, 77-78.)

Hedger's thought is that slurs are on a par with honorifics like 'sir' or 'miss'. These honorifics do not seem to describe the target in any way. Although 'sir' applies to males and 'miss' applies to females, Hedger is not happy to say that the extension of 'sir' is all males, as he would be reluctant to address Hitler as sir. He concludes that honorifics also lack extension all together. They only express admiration and respect. But where honorifics express respect, slurs are the other side of expressive coin. They express disrespect and contempt. Hedger concludes: "To sum up our conclusion thus far, the truth about racial slurs is that they are not truth apt". (Hedger 2012, 78-79.)

2.1.2 Motivation for pure views

I think that it is important to make Hedger's motivation for pure expressivism explicit because both me and Hedger suspect that the other pure view, pure descriptivism also shares a similar motivation. Hedger thinks that it is unacceptable that many statements containing slurs are true. He writes:

I think that logic, which is the basis for truth-conditional semantics, is meant to be the science of reasoning, and should adhere to norms of good reasoning. Part of my motivation for wanting a semantic theory which doesn't allow racist statements to be true or to be validly inferred from neutral statements is because this amounts to our accepting these sorts of statements and inferences as somehow appropriate. (Hedger 2012, 79.)

After this he goes on to say that he suspects that Christopher Hom has similar motivation behind his pure descriptivism.²¹ In both cases, the motivations for the semantic view of slurs is moral.

²¹Of course, Hedger does not use the term 'pure descriptivism' as it is my term for Hom's view.

2.1.3 Croom’s objection to pure expressivism

Let us start with the following observation. The consequence of Hedger’s view is that the N-word is offensive regardless of the target. He says that it does not matter whether the target is a person of Swedish descent or a black person. (Hedger 2012, 78.) I find this implausible. As a person of (neighbouring) Finnish descent, my reaction to the N-word (when applied to me) would probably be to wonder whether the person knows what the slur means. In any case, I would imagine that there is a dramatic difference when applied to a white Finnish person and when applied to a black person.

Adam Croom’s thoughts confirm my intuition. In his response “Remarks on ‘The Semantics of racial Slurs’” (Croom 2014, 11-32), Croom brings forth no less than 13 objections to Hedger’s proposal. Here I will concentrate on one which seems to be the most important and is enough to show that Hedger’s view cannot accommodate the linguistic evidence concerning slurs, despite the admirable motivation.

Croom says that Hedger might be right in his analysis concerning ‘fucker’ but if so, then he demonstrates that slurs are closer to ‘ass-hole’ which comprises expressive content and descriptive content. Croom presents the following case against purely expressive treatment. Let us start with the following pair

- (37) a. Max is a fucker. But I deny saying anything about his [X].
b. Max is French. But I deny saying anything about [X].

Imagine that [X] represents a variable which ranges over descriptive content, i.e. you can substitute the variable only with descriptive content. The substitution to purely descriptive content then blocks the felicity (37b) but not the felicity of (37a). That tells that in (37b) the attribution to Max is not purely expressive. Observe:

- (38) a. Max is a fucker. But I deny saying anything about his [ethnicity].
b. Max is French. #But I deny saying anything about his [ethnicity].

This seems obvious. Let us now broaden our examples

- (39) a. Max is a fucker. But I deny saying anything about his [X].
b. Maxine is French. But I deny saying anything about his [X].
c. Max is a Frog. But I deny saying anything about his [X].

and then do the same substitution:

- (40) a. Max is a fucker. But I deny saying anything about his [ethnicity].
b. Max is French. #But I deny saying anything about his [ethnicity].
c. Max is a Frog. #But I deny saying anything about his [ethnicity].

Croom explains that in the (a) cases, the descriptive features of the target are inessential since the speaker is expressing her own attitude towards the target. This confirms that Hedger is right in his analysis of ‘fucker’. But the triplet in (40) shows, on the one hand, the distance between (40a) and (40c) and, on the other hand, the similarity between (40b) and (40c). In addition to (40c) being offensive, it is also infelicitous in a similar manner as (40b). Both are infelicitous since the speaker is saying something about Max’s ethnicity. Furthermore, it seems that ‘fucker’ and ‘damn’ do not differ in descriptive content but there seems to be compelling case to distinguish between the descriptive content of ‘Frog’ and ‘bitch’, as Croom shows. consider again a variant of the triplet:

- (41) a. Maxine is a fucker. But I deny saying anything about her [gender].
b. Maxine is a Frog. But I deny saying anything about her [gender].
c. Maxine is a bitch. #But I deny saying anything about her [gender].

When the descriptive content is not about ethnicity, (41b) becomes felicitous (although offensive). Hence, there is a difference in the descriptive content of slurs like ‘Frog’ and ‘bitch’.

In sum, slurs do refer to social groups. Croom repeats Luvell Anderson and Ernest Lepore's point in "Slurring Words":

[There is a category of slurs] that target groups on the basis of race ('nigger'), nationality ('kraut'), religion ('kike'), gender ('bitch'), sexual orientation ('fag'), immigrant status ('wet-back') and sundry other demographics (Anderson and Lepore 2013a, 25).

But 'fucker' does not insult the target on the basis of any of these things. Hence, Hedger's pure expressivism does not work because ethnic slurs do have a descriptive content. This claim is highly plausible when the basic behaviour of slurs is examined.

2.2 Varieties of pure descriptivism

In the remainder of this chapter, we will take a look at two forms of pure descriptivism: Christopher Hom and Robert May's view on slurs and Michael Dummett's inferentialist approach. The key idea in Hom and May's view is an asymmetry between the xenophobic understanding and the civilised understanding. According to the view, the xenophobes are less competent speakers because they attach wrong truth conditions to the slurring sentences. Slurring sentences are systematically false but the xenophobes think they are true. I will go on to show that this view is not supported by the understanding of slurs. Particularly, it is not supported by the civilised understanding. This is somewhat ironic since Hom and May's central question concerns the civilised understanding.

After this I will consider Dummett's inferentialist view. I see Dummett's view as a weaker version of pure descriptivism. It does not say that slurring sentences are systematically false but claims that there is still something wrong with them. Inferentialism is based on the idea that the inference patterns governing a given concept ground the meaning of that concept. Given this, Dummett claims that there is something wrong with the inference patterns of slurs. Hence, he is saying that there is some-

thing wrong with the meaning of slurs. Following Williamson, I conclude that Dummett's version does not work either.

Previously, I claimed that slurs divide the speakers to civilised speakers and to xenophobic speakers. The concluding lesson of the chapter could be said to be that pure descriptivism is challenged from both directions. Even though Hom and May's version aims at explaining the civilised understanding, it cannot explain it. Whereas, Dummett's inferentialism aims at explaining the xenophobic thinking (or aims at explaining what is wrong with it) but it does not succeed in this task as Williamson shows.²²

2.3 Hom and May on slurs

2.3.1 Semantic and moral innocence

According to Hom and May (2013), the most important question with slurs is

How can a competent, rational speaker know the meaning of a slur without being committed to, or even complicit with, xenophobic attitudes?

The general outline of Hom and May's view is encapsulated with the following claims (or truths as Hom and May call them):

1. No Germans are Boches.
2. There are no Boche.
3. There are Germans.

According to Hom and May, the claims from 1 to 3 form the core of *semantic innocence*. The idea behind semantic innocence is that although the term 'German' refers to the set of German people, the slurring term 'Boche' does not refer to anything. Hence, everything expressed with this term comes out false.

²²Even though this is not the last word on the fate of inferentialism as it is revisited later on. But Williamson's point will do at this stage.

Semantic innocence relies on *moral innocence* which is the thesis that “there are no morally evaluable traits (good or bad) that are heritable on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, and the like”. Hom and May continue:

Accordingly, there can be no terms that are satisfied in virtue of there being individuals having those traits. There are no kikes because there is no one who ought to be the object of negative moral evaluation just because they are Jewish. (Hom and May 2013, 295.)

Semantic innocence, the thesis that slurring utterances are false, follows from moral innocence, from the thesis that no-one should be treated negatively on the basis of their ethnicity and so on.

2.3.2 Semantics of slurs

The *a priori* moral truth of moral innocence (no one should be evaluated negatively on the basis of their heritage) leads to the null extension.²³ There are no ‘Frogs’ because there is no one ought to be the object of negative moral evaluation just because they are French. (Hom and May 2013, 295.) The null extension then leads to semantic innocence, to the thesis that the slurring utterances are false. When the extension of slurring terms are empty, the atomic sentences containing them are false.

Hom and May introduce a formal tool to track the behaviour of slurs. Intensionally, it is something like

(PEJ) (Individual) x ought to be the target of negative moral evaluation and hence ought to be treated differently because of being (a member of social kind or group) X.

Extensionally, it is

[[PEJ]]: A function which takes the extension of a predicate expression to an empty set.

²³This was pointed out to me by Franz Knappik at the Humbolt University - King’s College Workshop which was held in May 2015 in London.

I will say a few clarifying points about the intensional side later on (in relation to the two concerns) but now I will concentrate on the extensional side.

PEJ denotes a second-level function that applies to a first-level concept, i.e. to predicates like ethnicity, religion, So if F is a neutral predicate for ethnicity, then PEJ(F) is a slurring term for F. If we have a neutral term, such as the French, then Hom and May’s lexical analysis of ‘Frog’ is PEJ(French). Hom and May point out that while PEJ(X) is unambiguous, there is a variation in the expressions of PEJ(X). It can be expressed with a single word such as ‘Frog’ but it can also be expressed by combining a neutral term with a pejorative term such as ‘dirty Jew’. It can even be expressed with extralinguistic markers such as tone and gestures which accompany the utterance of the neutral term. For example, one can give the ‘one finger salute’ while uttering the neutral term.²⁴ (Hom and May 2013, 298.)

Hom and May exploit the behaviour of predicate modifiers. The sentence

(42) Jack is a small elephant.

can be analysed at least in two ways. According to the conjunctive analysis, (42) comprises a conjunction of

(43) Jack is small and Jack is an elephant.

However, the problem with the analysis is that the conjunction entails that Jack is small but Jack is an elephant and thus Jack is not small. A mouse or an ant is small but even the smallest elephants are quite big. It is just that Jack is small for an *elephant*. The predicate modifier analysis respects the intuition that Jack is small for an elephant. According to this analysis, ‘small’ is a predicate modifier that takes the extension of ‘x is a elephant’ to a subset of elephants, namely to the set of small elephants. However, sometimes the modifier does not take the extension to a subset

²⁴As already noted, I am a bit sceptical about this idea. Rather, I will take it that PEJ turns the neutral term into a conventionally recognised slur, into an epithet. For example, PEJ(French) stands for ‘Frog’.

of the original set. This is the case with a predicate modifier like ‘toy’. When applied to predicate ‘x is an elephant’, you do not get a subset of elephants but something completely different as toy elephants are not a subset of elephants but, presumably, a subset of toys. In the case of ‘toy’, the predicate modifier analysis provides another advantage over the conjunctive analysis. It seems that for the sentence

(44) Jack is a toy elephant,

the conjunctive analysis offers the following conjunction:

(45) Jack is a toy and Jack is an elephant

which again entails that Jack is an elephant. However, the item in question hardly is an elephant. It is a toy.

Bearing this in mind, Hom and May suggest that PEJ should be compared with expressions like ‘fictional’ or ‘magical’. These take the extension (whatever it is) to an empty set. Surely, there are horses but there are no magical horses. The extension of the expression ‘magical horse’ is null.

Hom and May say that ‘magical’ brings out another useful comparison with PEJ. They say that ontologically ‘magical’ carries a false assumption “about the causal structure of the world”. They continue: “Nothing is magical, so ‘magical’ as a modifier term, drains extensionality”. In a similar manner, PEJ drains the extension but for a different reason. According to Hom and May, PEJ is ideologically, not ontologically, “loaded with false assumptions about the social and ethical structure of the world”. (Hom and May 2013, 299.) No one ought to be the target of a negative moral evaluation because of their ethnicity or gender or so on as PEJ suggests. The most important consequence of the proposal is that atomic statements containing slurs always come out false: The xenophobes “are not only wrong in the normative [moral] sense, but also wrong about the world in falsely attributing [stereotypical] properties to people” (Hom 2008, 437).²⁵

²⁵I think that two clarifying points are worth emphasising. First, Hom and May seem

Hom and May think that the understanding of slurs hinges on getting the moral reality right. On the one hand, the xenophobes believe that slurs are general terms that have a non-empty extension. That is, they believe that there are people who deserve to be treated negatively on the basis of their ethnicity. But they are wrong. Their beliefs go against the universal moral truth that no one deserves to be treated differently on the basis of their ethnicity. This fact makes the xenophobes, at least partially, incompetent speakers. The xenophobes “are linguistically incompetent as [xenophobic] knowledge does not issue the right truth-conditions containing pejoratives” (Hom and May 2013, 297). On the other hand, the civilised speakers understand correctly the meaning of slurs in that they assign the correct truth values to sentences containing slurring terms. Both parties do grasp the same concept but it is the difference in morality that yields the difference in truth values. The civilised people know the universal moral truth that produces the null extension of slurs: no one should be treated differently simply on the basis of ethnicity. (Hom and May 2013, 297.)²⁶

to be concentrating on a straightforward correspondence notion of truth and they do not think that fictional statements can be true in this correspondence sense.

Secondly, as Hom quite rightly emphasises, the falsity concerns only atomic statements: “Atomic predications with epithets will always be false [...]” (Hom 2008, 437). This is an important clarification because according to Hom and May’s view the following quantified statements:

$\forall x (\text{PEJ}(\text{French})(x) \rightarrow \text{French}(x))$

$\forall x (\text{PEJ}(\text{French})(x) \rightarrow \neg \text{French}(x))$

are *both* true just because the antecedent is false. I owe both of these points to Peter Sutton.

²⁶In Hom’s earlier work (which is discussed below), he says that his treatment of slurs is influenced by Bernard Williams in that Hom regards slurs to be thick concepts, combining a normative and a descriptive component into the analysis of slurs (Hom 2012, 394). It is a point worth making that the view on thickness is a branch of cognitivism and it is targeted very much against non-cognitivism. It is clear that Hom and May consider slurs to be first and foremost moral concepts in McDowell’s sense. This is somewhat surprising since the received view of McDowell-style thickness is that it does not affect slurs. In contrast to this, Hom and May go on to extend McDowell’s view also to slurs. The sense of a slur contains a moral evaluation of the target (which the neutral term does not contain) and given the right moral view, the evaluation influences the extension of the slurring term. This coheres with Williams’ argument when he explicates McDowell’s point. Williams’ basic idea of the entanglement challenge remains the same: The evaluation influences the extension.

2.4 Two concerns

2.4.1 Understanding of slurs

Hom and May say that their main objective is to explain the civilised understanding of slurs but it seems to me that there are some concerns regarding this objective. Observe first the following discussion between civilised Mary and xenophobic Jill:

(46) Mary: Hi Jill, do you know who were at the party yesterday?

Jill: Yes, there were a few Frogs and that Boche and ...

Then imagine that later on Mary is asked about the party and she says:

(47) I heard there were a few Frenchmen and that German guy and ...

On the basis of the conversation, it seems clear that Mary understands Jill's xenophobic utterance. That is because later when she was asked about the party, she does not want to repeat Jill's xenophobic words but manages to explain who were at the party by using the neutral words. Hence, the conversation addresses the main objective of Hom and May's project, to explain the civilised understanding. However, it is my contention that their view does not provide a very good explanation for this. It seems to me that there are two concerns about Hom and May's view:

1. Entailment concern.
2. Aboutness concern

Admittedly, both of these are related to the civilised understanding but there is a difference between them. In my view, the difference is crucial because Hom and May address the aboutness concern and they seem to think that this response is enough to explain the civilised understanding. My argument is that their response to the aboutness concern is not enough to explain the civilised understanding. Rather, certain entailment patterns do explain the understanding but Hom and May cannot make use of these patterns because they hold that slurring sentences are systematically false. First, we will look at the inference patterns and then we

will see how Hom and May try to by-pass these patterns by providing an explanation for the civilised understanding by addressing the aboutness concern. The conclusion is that the response is not enough to explain the civilised understanding. Finally, the concern about entailment is revisited in the context of Hom’s previous work.

2.4.2 Entailment concern

In his “The Meaning of Ouch and Oops” (“Ouch and Oops” from now on)²⁷, David Kaplan makes a point about the inferences concerning expressives. His famous example is that the inference from (48) to (49):

(48) That damn Kaplan was promoted

(49) Kaplan was promoted

is valid. However, the converse is not. Kaplan points out that although truth conditionally the premise and the conclusion are equivalent, there is a difference which blocks the converse inference. The premise contains more information, namely the expressive evaluation, which is not present in the conclusion. Kaplan’s conclusion is that while truth is immune to epithetical colour, the expressive content can affect logic in a way which Kaplan calls *information delimitation*. For Kaplan, validity is a matter of limiting semantic information in an inference. Good inferences should never add information halfway through the inference as does the inference from (49) to (48). Good inferences only manipulate information already there, never add information. The crucial point is that, according to Kaplan’s view, there are no truth conditional differences between (48) and (49) because the terms ‘Kaplan’ and ‘that damn Kaplan’ are co-extensional. That is, the extra information in (48) is non-truth conditional.

²⁷This is an unpublished work but Kaplan has presented it as a talk many times and there are several transcripts of these talks circulating. For this reason, “Ouch and Oops” is only referred as ‘ms’ short for manuscript. Also the page numbers are omitted since many of the transcripts do not contain page numbers or if they do, the numbering varies.

Kaplan also seems to be sympathetic to the idea that truth can account for information delimitation. According to this thought, there is a narrower notion of truth which recognises only descriptive content and then there is what Kaplan calls *truth-plus*. This is a kind of “truth with an attitude” which can account for expressive information. However, Kaplan still challenges the view that logical consequence is based on a more secure notion of truth:

The important point is that although we may have differing, even shaky, intuitions about truth, we –or at least, I– have more stable intuitions about logical consequence. These have been ignored because of the nearly universal, and according to me, fallacious, assumption that the notion of logical consequence is derivative from the more secure notion of truth.
(Kaplan ms.)

Rather, logical consequence is based on information delimitation, according to Kaplan. The refined conclusion then is that while truth (in the narrow sense) is immune to epithetical colour, the expressive information affects validity which is based on semantic delimitation. Most importantly, even the notion of truth-plus is based on logical consequence, not the other way round.

It seems that Hom and May cannot account for the distinctive inferential patterns of slurs. They hold that slurring sentences are systematically false. So any inference with a slurring sentence as a premise is indeed valid but it is trivially so because the validity flows from unsoundness, i.e. from false premises. One obvious explanation for Mary’s understanding in (46) and (47) is that she draws a conclusion similar to (49). Hom and May, on the other hand, cannot say this as they hold that slurs are systematically false. In the next subsection, we will see how Hom and May try to explain the civilised understanding while still holding that the inference patterns are unsound.

But before that, I need to anticipate a later development and distinguish my aims from Kaplan’s. Kaplan aims to explain the asymmetry

between the inference from (48) to (49) and the inference from (49) to (48). Whereas, my aim is just to explain the validity from (48) and (49). For this end, the co-extensionality between the slurring term and the neutral term is enough and there is no need to mention informational delimitation. As far as I am concerned, Kaplan's most important point is that the semantic understanding of slurring words is sensitive to the fact that the slurring words refer to whatever the neutral words refer to. In my view, this is a crucial point in Kaplan's thought and I think that it is the underlying point in Mary's and Jill's conversation. So the point against Hom and May is that the xenophobes may be morally confused when they use slurs but the moral confusion does not make them linguistically incompetent. Linguistically, the xenophobes are perfectly capable of expressing their confused ideas.

2.4.3 Aboutness concern

Hom and May anticipate one worry concerning their view. They label it the *aboutness objection*. As a first approximation, we have already seen that Hom and May think that the xenophobes and the civilised speakers both grasp the same slurring concept but only the civilised speakers realise that the content of slurring concept is empty. The aboutness objection is against this thought. Hom and May themselves express it in this way:

[S]urely racist users of such words manage to say (and are understood to say) derogatory things about something, namely members of their target class—after all, isn't someone who utters "Kikes are usurious" saying something about Jews? (Hom and May 2013, 302.)

However, Hom and May hold that this objection stems from a fundamental misunderstanding regarding the linguistic nature of slurs. Hom and May appeal to Frege's distinction between a *concept* and the *characteristic marks* of a concept. On the one hand, there is a concept and, on the other hand, there are properties which the object must have in order to fall under the concept. Frege calls these properties characteristic marks.

If a concept is defined on the basis of characteristic marks, that itself does not guarantee that something falls under the concept. According to Hom and May, this is exactly the case with slurring terms. When ‘French’ occurs in PEJ(French), it is a characteristic mark of the pejorative concept. However, if a characteristic mark of a concept is instantiated, it is not sufficient for the instantiation of the whole concept. For example, if the property ‘squareness’ is instantiated, it certainly is not enough to instantiate ‘rectangular square’. The term ‘rectangular square’ has no extension. ‘Square’ has an extension, but ‘rectangular square’ does not. Still squareness is a characteristic mark of ‘rectangular square’. (See Frege 1964, 11-12.) In a similar fashion, ‘Jew’ has an extension while PEJ(Jew) does not. In this sense then, the characteristic marks of the pejorative concept “fix the target of pejoration”. “It makes PEJ(Jew) be *about* Jews, and not about some other group”. In essence:

Statements that contain pejorative terms are about their intended targets because those targets satisfy the characteristic marks of pejorative concepts, not because they fall under those concepts. (Hom and May 2013, 302.)

I think that Hom and May are trying to say that even if the target satisfies *some* of the characteristic marks, that is not enough for the term to denote the target. Hom and May’s conclusion is that the response to the aboutness objection does provide an insight how the civilised people understand slurs. It is my interpretation that Hom and May think that the response to the aboutness objection shows that they do not need to worry about soundness as their response shows that they can explain the civilised understanding even in the case the civilised inferences are unsound. However, I am not so sure whether they have explained the civilised understanding. Let us consider the analogue they present, the analogue between PEJ(X) and a rectangular square. When a speaker talks about rectangular squares, it is not very clear what the person is talking about. Is the speaker talking about squares? In an everyday conversation, when someone starts to talk about rectangular squares, it is

not that obvious that the speaker is talking about real squares. Whereas it is perfectly clear that when someone talks about ‘Boches’, the speaker is talking about the Germans. This shows that there is a disanalogy between the conversation between Mary and Jill and the conversation about rectangular squares. It is my conclusion that more is needed to explain the civilised understanding of slurs.

As a summary of the discussion so far, one could say that we have two rival explanations for the civilised understanding of slurs. These explanations correspond with the two concerns. On the one hand, we have Kaplanian explanation which utilises the co-extensionality of the slurring term and the neutral term. This explanation takes the entailment concern seriously. It is also clear that this takes care of the aboutness concern since the co-extensionality thesis says that a slurring term and its neutral counterpart refer to the same thing. On the other hand, Hom and May take only the aboutness concern seriously and aim to explain the understanding from this perspective. I presented my reservations towards this response. At the very least, it is much weaker explanation for the civilised understanding than the Kaplanian explanation. In the light of this, my final conclusion is that it seems clear that Hom and May are not interested in explaining the inference patterns but they should be as the inference patterns provide better explanation for the civilised understanding.

2.5 Entailment revisited: Hom’s original view

2.5.1 Hom’s combinatorial externalism

Before writing the joint paper with May, Hom made a proposal concerning slurs in his seminal “Racial Epithets” (2008). Some aspects in these proposals are the same. Notably, they are both based on McDowell’s view on thickness, i.e. the moral evaluation and the extension of a slur are entangled. However, there are also differences and, in my view, these differences at least partly explain the difference in explaining the understanding. So

it might be a good idea to start with a general view of Hom's original proposal and then track the key differences when compared to the proposal Hom made with May. The main reason to discuss Hom's original proposal is that he also discusses the entailment concern but, according to my assessment, Hom does not provide a successful solution.

Hom begins his exposition by noting that, according to his semantic externalism, meaning is not completely determined by the internal mental states of individual speakers. According to Hom, semantic externalism is the thesis that meaning is "at least partly dependent on the external, social practices of the speaker's community". Hom goes on to argue that a speaker must also stand in the relevant *causal relation* to the world. (Hom 2008, 430.) Hom refers to two prominent expositions of a causal theory of reference. These are Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* (1972) and Putnam's "The Meaning of 'meaning'" (1975). Both of these develop a causal theory of reference and both of them subscribe to a Millian view about the content. With May, Hom adheres to a Fregean view. This might be a crucial difference as the later Fregean framework provides a response to the aboutness problem and Hom and May seem to think that this explains completely the civilised understanding. But in the earlier work, Hom does not have the "Fregean luxury". So he needs to think about the inference patterns.

Given that semantic externalism is on the background, Hom goes on to argue for *Combinatorial externalism*. He characterises it in the following way:

(CE) Racial epithets express complex, socially constructed, negative properties determined in virtue of standing in the appropriate external, causal connection with racist institutions. The meanings of epithets are supported and semantically determined by their corresponding institutions.

The racist institutions in the characterisation are a combination of two entities:

1. *Ideology* is a set of (usually) negative beliefs about particular people.

2. *Set of racist practices* can range from impolite social treatment to genocide.

These are, of course, closely related as Hom points out: Racists often justify and motivate their racist practices with a racist ideology. (Hom 2008, 431.) According to Hom, the derogatory content is derived from the racist social institutions, meaning that these institutions ground the meanings of slurs. The content of a slur itself is the following complex (i.e. combinatorial) property:

ought to be subject $p_1 + \dots + p_n$ because of being $d_1 + \dots + d_n$ all because of being NT.

Here $p_1 \dots p_n$ are deontic prescriptions for actions derived from racist social practices and $d_1 \dots d_n$ are negative properties derived from the racist ideology and NT is the neutral term. For example, when the above formula of content is applied to a slur ‘Frog’, we get something like:

ought to be placed in one of the lesser tables in a restaurant because of being vulgar all because of being French.

The main difference to Hom and May’s joint proposal is the absence of the two dimensional Fregean semantics. There is no intension which determines the semantic value. Instead, the moral evaluation is a part of the semantic value. In Hom and May’s proposal, it was only a part of the intension of PEJ which then determined the extension of PEJ as a function which takes the extension of the original predicate to an empty extension. Whereas here the extension of ‘Frog’ is ”ought to be placed in one of the lesser tables because of being vulgar all because of being French”. However, the main consequence of this proposal remains the same:

[W]hile racial epithets are entirely meaningful, the properties expressed by them have null extension. [...] Atomic predications with epithets will always be false because no one is in the extension of the corresponding complex racist property. This

seems to be correct result: atomic racist claims will always be false. (Hom 2008, 437.)

While the neutral term ‘French’ refers to the French people, the reference of the slurring term is null *because* of the moral evaluation which the slur contains. Hence, the idea of robust thickness that cognitivism put forward is still alive.

2.5.2 Orthodox and non-orthodox occurrences

In his “Puzzle about Pejoratives” (2012), Hom argues that the behaviour of pejoratives can be differentiated to *orthodox* and *non-orthodox* occurrences. Hom says that the orthodox occurrences have at least two distinguishing features:

1. Orthodox occurrences project out from the scope of truth conditional operators.
2. Orthodox occurrences do not make truth conditional contributions.

Consider again:

(50) Prince Charles is a Frog. No, Prince Charles is not a Frog.

The slurring effect is not cancelled by the negation. In (50), the negation does not succeed in cancelling the xenophobic effect of the slur. The following is even worse:

(51) Prince Charles is a Frog. No, he is a Limey.

If the purpose is to cancel the offensive part, (51) does it poorly. It not only insults the French but manages to insult the English too.

The second feature is that slurs do not make a truth functional contribution. The pair

- (52)
- a. That damn Kaplan was promoted.
 - b. Kaplan was promoted.

have the same truth conditional content. This is a direct consequence of the co-extensionality between ‘Kaplan’ and ‘that damn Kaplan’.

However, Hom's contention is that the orthodox occurrences must be distinguished from non-orthodox occurrences because non-orthodox occurrences do make a truth conditional contribution. Hom thinks that with this distinction, he can account for the inferential patterns which are distinctive to expressives and to slurs in particular. He gives the following examples:

(53) If John fucks up another project, the managing partner will fire him for it.

(54) John fucked the managing partner's daughter, and was fired for it.

In these examples, the expressives do seem to genuinely contribute to the truth conditions. However, there is an important qualification. It seems natural to interpret these as true if the state of affairs are appropriate: John is fired because he messed up another project in (53) and the conjunction in (54) is satisfied but Hom disagrees. He thinks that strictly speaking (54) is false and (53) is always true because the antecedent is always false.

Hom's aim is to come up with a unified theory of expressives. At the base, Hom has his combinatorial externalism and he builds his unified theory of expressives on that. He first generalises his treatment of ethnic slurs to a treatment of pejorative terms in general. As explained above, for Hom the content of slurs is

ought to be subject $p_1 + \dots + p_n$ because of being $d_1 + \dots + d_n$ all because of being NT.

Hom says that this content can then be extended to pejorative terms in general. For example, the term 'fuck' is a term which contains a deontic prescription, ideological properties which are norms surrounding pre-marital sex for conservative social institutions and finally there is the neutral term of 'having sex'. As a consequence, we have the following illuminating explanation:

So to say that John fucked Mary is to say (something like) that they each ought to be scorned, ought to go to hell, ought to be

treated as less desirable (if female), ought to be treated as more desirable (if male), ought to be treated as damaged (if female), . . . , for being sinful, unchaste, lustful, impure, . . . because of having sexual intercourse with each other (Hom 2012, 395).

It is crucial to bear in mind that the analogue between slurs and pejorative terms in general should be taken quite literally. The key elements are in place in the generalised account too. Just like slurs are empty, so are general pejorative terms like ‘fuck’. No one should be scorned or treated as damaged for being sinful or impure just because he or she has sex with someone but that is what the pejorative term suggests. Hom points out: “The resulting empty extension for pejoratives is parallel to the analysis that CE [combinatorial externalism] gives for slurs” (Hom 2012, 396). In the case of ‘fuck’ it is just that the word is more appropriated because people do not subscribe to strict religious ideologies any more. Nevertheless, a speaker who utters

(55) Fucking is *not* worse than making love. They are the same thing!
is making a mistake. The high appropriation of ‘fuck’ just conceals that.

2.5.3 Conversational implicature strategy

I think the previous view is far from plausible. According to my intuition, it is natural to accept (53) and (54) as true or false, depending on the circumstances. But if we leave that aside, we can move on to Hom’s main point about the inference patterns. On the basis of the previous view, Hom makes a proposal that aims to account for the inferences related to slurs. He makes a distinction between *literal* non-orthodox occurrences and *non-literal* non-orthodox occurrences. In the case of non-literal non-orthodox occurrences, the literal content serves as a base to generate a metaphoric content. So in

(56) John fucked up another case.

the speaker is using the term ‘fuck up’ in metaphoric way, drawing from a complex ideological relation which suggests that ‘fucking’ has something

to do with being damaged or devalued. Given this, Hom then goes on to make use of Gricean *conversational implicature* to explain the orthodox occurrences, i.e. the occurrences which project out, (do *not* make a truth conditional contribution). Hom invites us to consider the following orthodox occurrences:

(57) The dog is on the fucking couch.

(58) Heidi and Spencer are a fucking couple.

Hom admits that in these sentences the occurrences of the pejoratives are non-truth conditional. That is the metaphoric reading. However, Hom insists that there is also the literal truth conditional reading which says something like:

(59) The dog is on the fucking couch (i.e. on the couch where morally questionable sex occurs).

(60) Heidi and Spencer are a fucking couple (i.e. they have morally questionable sex).

The question for Hom now is why the metaphoric and non-truth conditional readings are much more plausible for a hearer of (57) and (58). In his answer, Hom appeals to Gricean conversational maxims. According to him, what happens is that the hearer arrives to the conversationally implicated content with the following “calculation”:

1. Why would the speaker talk about a couch where morally impermissible sex occurs?
2. I do not believe that the speaker is opting out of being communicatively cooperative.
3. So there must be a relevant interpretation that she is intending for me to grasp.
4. Since sexual intercourse isn’t relevant in this context, the speaker must be expressing her extreme (either positive or negative) judgement of the current situation with the dog on the couch, to the same degree of severity as the negative attitudes associated with fucking.

Armed with this machinery, Hom goes on to tackle the Kaplanian inference patterns:

Kaplan [...] points out that while inferences like (44) appear to be valid, inferences like (45) do not:

(44) Heidi and Spencer are a fucking couple.

Therefore, Heidi and Spencer are a couple.

(45) Heidi and Spencer are a couple.

Therefore, Heidi and Spencer are a fucking couple.

[...] The view under consideration has the virtue of a straightforward account for such inferences. If Heidi and Spencer are a couple having morally impermissible sexual intercourse, then it logically follows in (44) that Heidi and Spencer are a couple. But from Heidi and Spencer being a couple, it does not logically follow in (45) that they are a couple having morally impermissible sexual intercourse. (Hom 2012, 400-401.)

It seems that Hom thinks that his view does explain the inference patterns but that is very questionable.

2.5.4 Two readings and a dilemma for Hom

To me, the entailment is still a problem. To recapitulate, Hom thinks that there are two readings for “The dog is on the fucking couch”. Hence we have two different sets of truth conditions: The truth conditions for the non-literal reading are

(TCN) “The dog is on the fucking couch” is true iff the dog is on the couch.

where the speaker expresses her annoyance for the situation with the word ‘fuck’ but this is not a part of the truth conditional content of the sentence. The truth conditions for the literal reading are

(TCL) “The dog is on the fucking couch” is true iff the dog is on a couch where questionable sex occurs.

Hom clearly takes TCL reading to be the basis of his defence and goes on to argue that when TCL reading is the premise, the inference is good. Surely, Hom is right in saying that the inference from “the dog is on the fucking couch” to “the dog is on the couch” is valid but not for the reasons he says. It is valid because the premise is false as TCL readings are systematically false, at least on Hom’s account. So the question we need to ask is “Does (44) in the quotation really present good logical deduction on any standard account?” To me, it does not. In terms of validity, you can infer anything from a contradiction but that does not mean that contradictions are alright. Quite the opposite, just because contradictions entail everything, they are bad. Similarly, when the premise set includes false sentences, you can substitute the conclusion with any sentence and the inference remains valid. This hardly is what logical entailment means in any serious sense. In logical entailment, the idea is that a true conclusion logically follows from *true premises*. The analogue between (44) in the quotation and contradictions should be taken quite literally. The inference

$$\frac{A \ \& \ \text{not-}A}{A}$$

is an instance of an absurdity rule which surely is a valid rule in classical logic. But it is valid because the counterexample set $\{A \ \& \ \text{not-}A, \text{not-}A\}$ is inconsistent with any assignment, no matter what the conclusion is. A contradiction like “A & not-A” is guaranteed to be false on logical grounds. The constant falsity stems from the logical rules governing negation and conjunction. (That is, the content of A does not matter.) The contradictory premise ensures the inconsistency alone. So it does not matter what the conclusion is. Hence, contradictions entail everything and thus should be avoided. In an analogous way, Hom thinks that slurring statements are systematically false. On Hom’s account, slurring sentences are false on semantic grounds, not on logical grounds. (Namely, the content of A matters.) However, the crucial point is that both con-

traditions and slurring sentences are systematically false. The upshot is that semantically unsound inferences should be avoided: No matter what the conclusion is, the inference remains valid. In relation to the inferences (44) and (45) in the quotation, Hom notes that any non-truth conditional view must either posit some further mechanisms to explain the validity (like Kaplan does with his informational delimitation) “or else develop some kind of error theory for explaining our mistaken logical intuitions” (Hom 2012, 401). But it seems to me that Hom needs to explain how unsound inferences are good.

It could be that Hom is mistaken in the readings because, with TCN reading, things would be more plausible. The metaphorical reading is true just in the case the dog is on the couch and this is enough to explain (44) in the quotation. However, the problem is that this would not do in the case slurs. Hom (and May) have adamantly insisted that slurs are systematically false and they have never suggested that there is a metaphorical reading in the case of slurs to accommodate some of the intuitions concerning the inference patterns of slurs. So with the help of the two readings, you can set up a dilemma for Hom. The dilemma can be highlighted with slurs. On the one horn, If Hom admits that slurs have a TCN reading then the soundness of the inferences can be saved but, on the down side, Hom has to give up the idea that sentences involving slurs are always false which is very much his core thesis. The soundness of the inferences concerning pejorative expressions requires that the premises are true and only under the TCN reading, the sentences containing slurs are true. On the other horn, if Hom maintains that the cases involving slurs are cases of TCL readings, then he stays faithful to his starting point that slurs are always false, but he loses the soundness of the inferences.

2.6 Intermediate summary

So far, we have been discussing Hedger’s view and Hom and May’s view. They share the claim that there is something wrong with the semantics of slurs. Both views have a moral motivation. Hom and May want to

take the study of slurs back to semantic innocence. They do not want that the xenophobes and the racists speak the truth and they dub any view that allows this as morally corrupted. Hedger has a similar motivation. However, I think it is clear by now that this motivation just cannot accommodate the linguistic evidence concerning the *civilised understanding*. Hedger's view does not do justice for the civilised understanding as Croom shows that, contrary to Hedger's thought, even under the civilised understanding you can recover the descriptive content from a slurring sentence. Hom and May take the civilised understanding to be the main aim of their view but they fail to provide an adequate explanation for that understanding. Their response to the aboutness concern just does not provide an explanation for the civilised understanding. The problem is the analogue with rectangular square. When a speaker is talking about 'Frogs', it seems bit of a reach to compare this to the talk about rectangular squares. The immediacy of the civilised understanding just does not support the analogue. At the same time, I have discussed at length, whether Hom's original view could explain inferential patterns and the conclusion is that Hom cannot explain them, not without abandoning the claim that slurs are systematically false. Considering all this, I conclude that pure views cannot explain the civilised understanding.²⁸

²⁸Hedger makes an interesting point against Hom and May. He says that the idea that atomic slurring sentences are systematically false is in the end only a small victory for the civilised side. On his account, truth aptness or the lack of truth aptness follows also to complex sentences but on Hom and May's view falsity does not follow in the same way. (Hedger 2012, 80-81.) For example, Hedger mentions an implication which has a slurring antecedent. That is enough to make the whole implication true on Hom and May's account. Furthermore, a sentence like "Pierre is a Frog and Mary is a Limey and Hans is a Boche or snow is white" is true when disjunction is the principle connective because snow indeed is white. In distinction, Hedger's view categorises these as not truth apt since they contain parts that are not truth apt. Finally, neither Hedger's nor Hom and May's account can distinguish between the universal quantified statements discussed in fn. 25. As discussed, on Hom and May's account both are true and on Hedger's account both of them lack truth value. Of course, Hedger does not want to distinguish these statement because he denies that slurs have any descriptive content. But if we take that 'Frog' refers to the French but not to the English then the quantified statements start to make sense: All 'Frogs' are French and there are no non-French 'Frogs'. That is, " $\forall x (\text{PEJ}(\text{French})(x) \rightarrow \text{French}(x))$ " is true and " $\forall x (\text{PEJ}(\text{French})(x) \rightarrow \neg \text{French}(x))$ " is false. It seems to me that these problems (if they are considered to be problems) are symptoms of a bigger problem which is the difficulty

In the next section, the *xenophobic understanding* will be given centre stage as we will look at another version of pure descriptivism. The proposal is based on the inferentialist conception of meaning.

2.7 Slurs and inferentialism

2.7.1 Debate between referentialism and inferentialism

Timothy Williamson captures nicely the dispute between referentialism and inferentialism. He says that the difference is the direction of explanation: “referential[ism] gives center stage to the referential semantics for a language, which is then used to explain the inference rules for the language, [...] as those which preserve truth [...]”. Inferentialism, on the other hand, starts off with inferential rules “which are then used to explain its referential semantics, [...] as semantics on which the rules preserve truth”. He adds that these directions cannot be combined because it would cause an obvious circularity in the explanation. (Williamson 2009, 137.)

So far in this chapter, we have only considered referential treatments of slurs. We started off with Hedger’s proposal and then proceeded to Hom and May’s referential treatment of slurs and then moved on to see how that treatment accommodates the most obvious inferential patterns of slurring terms and the corresponding neutral terms. The conclusion was that Hom and May’s treatment did not do a very good job in explaining these patterns. Next we are going to see if pure descriptivism could work if it started off the other way round. Michael Dummett’s inferentialist treatment starts off with the inferential patterns of slurs and then proceeds to assign semantic values to the slurring terms.

The upshot of the discussion at this point is that this does not work very well either. Timothy Williamson’s objection to Dummett’s treatment clearly show that in order to reveal the understanding of slurs, we need to

that pure views have in explaining the civilised understanding.

see xenophobes as competent speakers. Contrary to what Hom and May suggested and to what Dummett is suggesting below.

2.7.2 Outlining the inferentialist view of meaning

Dummett has proposed an influential analysis of the use of slurs based on inferences. His analysis has been widely accepted, at least in the inferentialist circles (see Brandom 1994, 94-130; McCullagh 2011, 293-319; Whiting 2008, 375-388). Williamson, on the other hand, finds the analysis problematic. It does not seem to explain how slurs are actually used which is somewhat ironic because inferentialism has strong affiliations with the view that meaning stems from use of language.

Inferentialism starts off with the inferential rules of language which are then used to explain the referential semantics of the language on which the rules preserve truth. Arthur Prior proposed a famous problem for inferentialism. ‘Tonk’ is a sentential connective with the following introduction and elimination rules:

$$\text{Tonk-I: } \frac{A}{A \text{ tonk } B} \qquad \text{Tonk-E: } \frac{A \text{ tonk } B}{B}$$

Tonk-I is the standard introduction rule for disjunction and Tonk-E is the standard elimination rule for conjunction. Let us suppose that A is true and B is false, then it is obvious that the rules for ‘tonk’ still allow the above inference and it is clear that the rules for ‘tonk’ are not truth-preserving. (Prior 1960, 38-39.) The most obvious way to rule out ‘tonk’ is an appeal to semantics (of propositional logic): Since B is false but ‘tonk’ rules allow to infer that B is true anyway, the rules for ‘tonk’ themselves must be ruled out. This response however does not stay faithful to the inferentialist project. It appeals to referential semantics to rule out the bad inferential rule. In order to stay faithful to inferentialist direction of explanation, the inferential rules must rule out bad semantics, not the other way round.

In an equally famous response, Nuel Belnap showed that tonk-like

connectives can be ruled out in a manner that stays faithful to inferentialism. He sets two constraints on the inferential practice. First, he introduces the notion of conservative extension. It means that if we start with the part of the language that does not contain the connective ‘tonk’, then by adding ‘tonk’ to the language we get a non-conservative extension of the language. (Belnap 1962, 130-134.) As Williamson puts it, “the restriction of the extended consequence relation to the original language is just the original consequence relation; the new rules do not interfere with inferential relations between old sentences”. Williamson remarks that the notion of conservative extension is available to the inferentialist since it does not appeal to referential semantics of the original or the extended language. Secondly, Belnap’s notion of unique characterisation provides a characterisation of a new expression E iff given two new expressions E1 and E2 governed by rules R(E1) and R(E2), then those rules should make E1 and E2 equivalent. Williamson says that unique characterisation is there to make sure that the rules are not too weak to define the new expression adequately. (Williamson 2009, 138-139 and Belnap 1962, 130-134.)

Michael Dummett’s notion of harmony is very close to Belnap’s conservative extension and unique characterisation. The requirement of harmony is that when the introduction rule specifies the conditions for applying the target expression, then the introduction rule have to match the consequences of applying the rule that are specified by the elimination rules (Williamson 2009, 145). As Rumfitt points out, the elimination rule can unpack only the information that the introduction rule packed in (Rumfitt 2000, 789). In the case of ‘tonk’, too much is unpacked. The standard rules for conjunction are, on the other hand, harmonious:

$$\&-I: \frac{A \quad B}{A \& B} \quad \&-E(1): \frac{A \& B}{A} \quad \&-E(2): \frac{A \& B}{B}$$

The conditions for asserting “A & B” is that A is assertable and that B is assertable. When you eliminate the symbol ‘&’ from “A & B”, you are back in the starting point: A is assertable; B is assertable. These

rules determine the meaning of the symbol ‘&’. On Dummett’s terminology, if conservative extension is in place between the introduction and the elimination rules, the rules are *harmonious*.

It is also important to note that in the following we are only interested in conservative extension, not so much in unique characterisation. That is because Dummett claims that the inferential rules for a slurring term like ‘Boche’ do not satisfy the notion of conservative extension. This means that only conservative extension is at stake. Another terminological point is that, following Dummett, the terms ‘harmony’ and ‘conservative extension’ are closely related. Harmonious rules produce a conservative extension and non-harmonious rules produce a non-conservative extension.

2.7.3 Inferentialist account of slurs

Whiting on conservative extension

Daniel Whiting characterises conservative extension in the following way:

An extension of the language is conservative if and only if one cannot use the new vocabulary to derive any statements in the original vocabulary that could not already be derived using the original vocabulary. More informally, the problem is that non-conservative rules for the use of an expression clash with the meanings of existing expressions or, rather, the rules governing their employment. The novel rules ‘clash’ in the sense that, when added to the established rules, they lead to contradiction. As a result, the extended language is inconsistent. (Whiting 2008, 376)

According to Whiting, the crucial point with defective concepts is that the governing inferential patterns are non-harmonious and hence the non-conservative extension of the language will clash with the original language and “as a result, the extended language is inconsistent”. Whiting goes on to explain how this is then reflected by the use of defective concepts like ‘Boche’. Assume that language L does not contain the term ‘Boche’ and

then you add the term to the language thereby forming extended language L_{ex} . In this case, extended L_{ex} is inconsistent in respect to the original L . According Whiting, this is what happens:

Suppose, for example, that Merkel was born in Germany and does not cause suffering with disregard. On this basis – given what one may assume to be among the established inferential rules for the employment of ‘German’ and ‘cruel’ – one infers ‘Merkel is German and is not cruel.’ However, by following Boche- introduction one may make the transition to ‘Merkel is Boche and is not cruel,’ and in turn Boche-elimination allows one to infer ‘Merkel is cruel and is not cruel.’ Hence, in such a way, the introduction of the Boche-rules to a Boche-free language leads to contradiction [...] (Whiting 2008, 379.)

As a result, Whiting is settled that the inferentialist frame does show what is wrong with a slurring (and defective) concept like ‘Boche’. It cannot be a good thing if the adding of a defective concept produces a contradiction as soon as it is added to the language. To repeat, the problem is the *meaning* of ‘Boche’. Given this, Whiting sees a problem in explaining how a defective concept like ‘Boche’ is part of natural language in the first place. Whiting presents a disanalogy between ‘tonk’ and ‘Boche’ to illustrate his point. The idea of defective concept is successful in the case of ‘tonk’: Just because it is a defective concept, it is not part of our language. But ‘Boche’ *de facto* is part of our language. How is that possible? As Whiting says about inferentialism: “It is successful in the case of ‘tonk’ precisely because we want to banish it from the language, but it is of less help in the case of ‘Boche’ precisely because our language already contains it” (Whiting 2008, 380). The point is that Whiting does not see non-harmony of the rules problematic. Quite the opposite, it explains what is bad about slurring concepts. The real problem is how can there ever be a defective concept like ‘Boche’ in our language since they should be banished just because they are defective and all they do is create contradictions.

However, I do not agree with Whiting. His characterisation of conservative extension is somewhat inaccurate. The point in non-conservative extension is not that it produces a contradiction. Rather, you can first define conservative extension between language L and its extension L_{ex} as

$$\Gamma \vdash_L A \equiv \Gamma \vdash_{ex} A$$

This is enough for the definition of conservative extension. The consequence relation between the original language and the extended language match. On the basis of this, you can define a non-conservative extension as

$$\Gamma \vdash_L A \not\equiv \Gamma \vdash_{ex} A$$

However, this is not enough to define the non-conservative extension. The definition simply says that the consequence relation between the original language and the extended language do not match. It must be also stated that the theorems of the original language is a proper subset of the theorems of the extended language.

To see where exactly Whiting's characterisation goes wrong reveals a crucial point about conservative extension and more importantly about the harmony constraint. 'Tonk' is a concept which is apt to produce a contradiction very quickly but in one very crucial sense that is beside the point. Strictly speaking, Whiting is right about 'tonk' but if one generalises from 'tonk' a general problem with defective concepts, then you get you get a too strong notion of harmony which just distorts the debate between inferentialism and referentialism. In next section, I will give an example of non-harmonious rules which surely does not create a contradiction but still is non-conservative.

Dummett's criticism of classical logic

In order to see what harmony is about, it might be useful to run the core points of Dummett's argument against classical logic (CL). The problem with CL, according to Dummett, is that the rules for negation are not harmonious. Intuitionistic logic (IL) and CL share the introduction:

$$\neg\text{-I:} \quad \frac{\begin{array}{c} A \\ \vdots \\ \perp \end{array}}{\neg A}$$

The rule says that if A leads (with some unspecified proof procedure indicated by the dots) to absurdity (\perp), then infer $\neg A$ from that. But after this, IL and CL go their separate ways. The intuitionistic elimination and the classical elimination rules are

$$\text{IL-}\neg\text{-E:} \quad \frac{A \quad \neg A}{\perp} \qquad \text{CL-}\neg\text{-E:} \quad \frac{\neg\neg A}{A}$$

According to Dummett, only IL- \neg -E is harmonious in respect to \neg -I. In the inferentialist frame, an argument carries the justification or proof of the premises to the conclusion but in CL- \neg -E²⁹ this does not happen. An assertion of $\neg\neg A$ contains (according to the introduction rule) the evidence that it is consistent to assert A. However, the evidence for the consistency of A is not yet a proof for A. The point is that proof or warrant justifies every step of in the inference. If we take the rules for conjunction as an example, then whole procedure is captured by:

$$\wedge\text{-I:} \quad \frac{\begin{array}{cc} \Gamma & \Delta \\ \vdots & \vdots \\ A & B \end{array}}{A \wedge B}$$

The introduction of the conjunction is ultimately justified with the premise sets Γ and Δ and the proof of those is carried via A and B to “ $A \wedge B$ ”. At the same time, the warrants for Γ and Δ are necessary and sufficient warrant for the assertion of “ $A \wedge B$ ” but this is not the case with CL- \neg -E. The rule needs the assumption of Bivalence to go through. So when the classical rule suggests that one can infer A from $\neg\neg A$, it is non-harmonious.

²⁹The rule is also called *Double Negation Elimination* (DNE) rule.

Namely, it unpacks more than the introduction rule packs in.

Because of this, the discussion usually expands to a debate about the nature of truth. For the intuitionists, truth is an *epistemically constrained* notion. For the proponent of CL and referentialism, truth is evidence-transcendent. As far as the inferentialist is concerned, CL- \neg -E is not truth preserving. At the same, CL- \neg -E preserves referentialist or realistic notion of truth. If realism is right about the *bivalent* nature of truth, then CL- \neg -E does preserve truth.

My point can be put in the following way. CL is an extension of IL. That is, all theorems (proved sentences) of IL are also theorems of CL but not the other way round. If it happened that there is a contradiction between IL and the extended part of CL, that would mean that CL itself is contradictory; but surely no intuitionist claims that CL is inconsistent. Rather, the accusation is that CL is a non-conservative extension of IL. It is produced with a non-harmonious pair of rules, \neg -I and CL- \neg -E.³⁰

The analogy between ‘tonk’ and ‘Boche’

One might wonder, as Williamson does, whether ‘tonk’ is a realistic example. It is questionable whether ‘tonk’ represents a concept at all. It is fairly certain that no natural language contains a connective like ‘tonk’. To borrow Graham Priest’s phrase, it would surely explode the language to triviality. So at this point, one can ask whether there actually is any expression which genuinely stands for a concept but whose use is defective in the sense that the rules are non-harmonious. (Williamson 2009, 139.) Dummett anticipated this question and answers to it by referring to the use of slurs:

A simple case would be that of a pejorative term, e.g. ‘Boche’.

³⁰In his classic paper “Truth”, Dummett lays out his criticism of CL on the basis of the nature of truth (Dummett 1978, 1-14) and continues this attack in his *Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (1991). More recent discussions are Crispin Wright’s *Truth and Objectivity* (1992) and Neil Tennant’s *Anti-realism and Logic* (1987) and *Taming of the True* (2002). Also Stig Alstrup Rasmussen and Jens Ravnkilde’s “Realism and Logic” captures well the reasons why truth is important in understanding the debate between realism and anti-realism (Rasmussen and Ravnkilde 1982, 379-437).

The condition for applying the term to someone is that he is of German nationality; the consequences of its application are that he is barbarous and more prone to cruelty than other Europeans. We should envisage the connections in both directions as sufficiently tight as to be involved in the very meaning of the word: neither could be severed without altering its meaning. Someone who rejects the word does so because he does not want to permit a transition from the grounds for applying the term to the consequences of doing so. The addition of the term 'Boche' to a language which did not previously contain it would produce a non-conservative extension, i.e. one in which certain statements which did not contain the term were inferable from other statements not containing it which were not previously inferable. [...] In the case of logical constants we may regard the introduction rules governing it as the conditions for the assertion of a statement of which it is the main operator, and the elimination rule as giving the consequences of such a statement: the demand for a harmony between is then expressible as the requirement that the additional constant to the language produces a conservative extension of the language.³¹ (Dummett 1973, 454-455.)

The upshot is that 'tonk' and 'Boche' are analogous just in the previous "weaker" sense. This is exactly why Dummett ties the meaning of slurs, not only with the meaning of 'tonk' but also with the meaning of logical constant like '&'. On the basis of this, Williamson proposes the following rules for 'Boche':

$$\text{Boche-I: } \frac{x \text{ is German}}{x \text{ is Boche}} \qquad \text{Boche-E: } \frac{x \text{ is Boche}}{x \text{ is cruel}}$$

Here the consequences of asserting "he is a Boche" do not match with the conditions for that assertion. That seems quite obvious. Boche-E

³¹I wanted to quote Dummett at length because Dummett's "analysis" of slurs has received a lot of attention. This is the "analysis" in its entirety.

surely unpacks more than the Boche-I rule packs in.

The invited conclusion is that slurs are the kind of concepts we are after. The use of slurs represent an actual case for a *defective concept* and this defectiveness is seen in the way a xenophobe uses language. Moreover, slurs clearly express concepts. It seems obvious that a xenophobe uses sentences containing slurs to express complete thoughts. It seems equally obvious that we find the use of slurs offensive just because we do understand them, not because the use of slurs is gibberish to us. (e.g. Boghossian and Williamson 2003, 234.) The badness of slurs seems to be resting “on inadequate proof-theory” (Williamson 2009, 140). This claim certainly has a ring of over-intellectualisation but the point is that the non-harmonious rules of a certain word allow the inference. It is just that the application of the term ‘Boche’ licences to attribute cruelty to its target without a single shred of evidence that the target actually is cruel. According to inferentialism, the meaning of a word is explicated with the inferential pattern. Hence it is the meaning of the word ‘Boche’ that allows the inference from German to cruelty. This is exactly what the semantic view is trying to capture. Furthermore, there is another thesis to pure descriptivism. It is that the meaning of slurs is somehow ‘bad’. Dummett’s view satisfy this thesis too with the claim that inference patterns governing slurs are non-harmonious.

In the following, Williamson’s objection to the inferentialist’s account will be examined. Williamson claims that the inferential rules do not determine the reference of ‘Boche’ in such a way that they match the linguistic evidence concerning the use of slurs. In essence, the challenge put forward by Williamson is the following:

Determination of reference: Boche-I and Boche-E rules do not match the use of slurring terms.

The core question here is the exact nature of defectiveness and its consequences.

2.7.4 Determining the reference

The inferentialist procedure first establishes the inferential rules and then, on the basis of the rules, assigns reference to the terms *in a truth-preserving way*. Williamson's point is that in the light of this procedure, the badness of 'Boche' becomes dubious.

Assuming that semantics is already in place for a language (via the previous inferential rules) and someone introduced a new term for this language, say, expression E. It is then subject to new rules R(E). In this case and according to the inferentialist outlook, the procedure of fixing the reference has three possible outcomes. First, If an assignment X as the reference of E makes R(E) truth preserving (and no other does), then E refers to X. Second case is this. If many different assignments all make R(E) truth preserving, then the reference of E is indeterminate between all these assignments. Third, If no assignment of the reference for E make R(E) truth preserving, then E does not refer. (Williamson 2009, 143-144 and 2003, 258.) The point that Williamson is trying to make is that no assignment of reference for 'Boche' makes Boche-I and Boche-E rules truth preserving. From the civilised point of view, every non-cruel German provides an counterexample to the Boche-I and Boche-E rules. To emphasise, *from the civilised point of view* it might seem plausible that 'Boche' does not refer but this is not the point of Boche-I and Boche-E rules. The point of these rules is to capture the *xenophobic* way of thinking. When it comes to xenophobic thinking, Whiting's point about Merkel is not effective. According to xenophobes, the mere membership in a social group warrants derogation. Xenophobes think in the first place that Merkel is cruel, just because she is German and when 'Boche' is introduced to the language, it provides a very handy way to express this thought. The upshot is that there are no contradictions or inconsistencies in xenophobic language before or *after* the introduction of 'Boche'.

When you think about the uses of 'Boche', surely, at least the xenophobes think that the term refers, i.e. xenophobes think that it refers to someone or to some set of people, namely to the Germans. The real crux of the discussion is that Williamson goes out show that the rules do not

accommodate even the *xenophobic* use. Initial observation is this. Even the most persistent xenophobe (someone who thinks that all Germans are cruel) should find the rules unsatisfying. For they do not yield a determinate reference. Even the most persistent xenophobe thinks that the set of Germans is a subset of cruel people, but not the other way round. Presumably, xenophobes do not think that the Germans are the only cruel foreigners. Yet the rules treat the set cruel people and the set of German people symmetrically. The rules misrepresent the xenophobic mindset: The rules are truth-preserving in the case the reference is assigned to be the set of Germans *and* the rules are truth-preserving when the reference is assigned to be the set of cruel people. Because of this symmetry between the rules, they cannot explain why a xenophobe might say things like:

- (61) Charles Manson is as cruel as a Boche but he is not a Boche; he is American.

This shows that xenophobes do not think that the reference of ‘Boche’ is indeterminate between two sets, the Germans and the cruel people. Rather, it shows that there is nothing indeterminate in the extension of ‘Boche’ in the xenophobe’s mind. The problem, according to Williamson, is that “Dummett gives no more weight to one of his rules than to other” but (61) demonstrates that xenophobes emphasise the introduction rule, i.e. the tie between being a German and being a ‘Boche’. But even if Dummett pointed out which rule to emphasize, mere emphasis would not solve the problem. The problem is that Dummett’s rules do not match the actual use because they do not provide a determine reference. The actual use being of course xenophobic use because only xenophobes apply the slurs.

2.7.5 Dilemma for Dummett

The obvious solution to the problem is to try to accommodate inferentialism to the actual use of language by harmonizing the inferential rules. We can do this either by assigning the set cruel people as the extension of

‘Boche’ or the extension of German people. In the first case, we can take the existing elimination rule and come up with a new introduction rule:

$$\text{Boche-I*}: \frac{x \text{ is cruel}}{x \text{ is a Boche}} \qquad \text{Boche-E}: \frac{x \text{ is a Boche}}{x \text{ is cruel}}$$

The rules are harmonious but no progress has been made. The rules still badly misrepresent the extension of ‘Boche’. The rules suggest that even Charles Manson is a ‘Boche’ because he is cruel. But he is not a ‘Boche’, he is an American. (Williamson 2009, 145-147.) These rules completely betray the thought that the target is first and foremost the set of German people who are more prone to cruelty than your average European.

Let us try the other assignment. In this case, we only take Boche-I rule and we come up with harmonious a new elimination rule. This time, the introduction rule stays the same:

$$\text{Boche-I}: \frac{x \text{ is a German}}{x \text{ is a Boche}} \qquad \text{Boche-E*}: \frac{x \text{ is a Boche}}{x \text{ is a German}}$$

The proposed rules are harmonious and together the rules determine the set of Germans as the extension of ‘Boche’. The set of Germans makes the rules truth-preserving. There are two reasons to prefer these rules. First, the set of Germans is the smallest set that makes Boche-I truth preserving. Hence the Boche-E’ is the *strongest* harmonious rule with Boche-I. Neil Tennant has shown that if the introduction and elimination rules are thought as meaning specifying rules as the inferentialists think, then the strongest possible rules should be preferred (Tennant 1987, 94-97; see also Rumfitt 2000, 789-790). Secondly and more relevantly, although every non-cruel German is a counterexample to these rules, Williamson says that all the dictionaries he consulted do define ‘Boche’ in this way. They define ‘Boche’ as a German but highlight that it is derogatory. So at least the above rule satisfies lexicographer’s intuition about slurs. Nevertheless, even the most plausible rules are far from satisfying. Although the rules are now harmonious or, more appropriately, *because* they are now harmonious, they fail to explain what is bad about the slurs. Hence,

Williamson's point can be presented a dilemma for inferentialism. *Either* the rules for 'Boche' are harmonious but then the inferentialist cannot explain what is so bad about slurs *or* the rules are non-harmonious but this misrepresents the way xenophobe actually uses language.³² (Williamson 2009, 147.)

2.8 Summary

The foregoing discussion has shown that the truth functional semantic account does not work. Two things are notable. First, the truth functional semantic view cannot explain the civilised understanding as the discussion about the (Kaplanian) inferential patterns showed. At the same time, Williamson's objection to Dummett's inferentialism shows that the inferentialist version of pure descriptivism cannot account for the xenophobic use.

Secondly, the discussion concentrates too much on vindicating the civilised intuition that there is something wrong with the *meaning* of slurs. As it was noted, slurs divide speakers to two categories, those who apply slurs and those who do not apply slurs. The consequence of this distinction is that the majority of the evidence concerning the use of slurs, i.e. application of slurs, is xenophobic use. To dismiss the majority of evidence concerning slurs as confused and mistaken seems like dubious starting point.

In the following, I will consider only views that allow xenophobes to be truth speaker, at least sometimes. I do this by embracing so-called moral corruption, i.e. I discuss only views that adhere to the thesis about the co-extensionality of the slurring term and the neutral term.

I guess you could phrase the concluding moral by saying that in battle against racism and xenophobia, you are not doing any favours by underestimating your enemy.

³²At the moment this will do but inferentialism will be revisited in Chapter 5. I will develop one more inferentialist proposal which I think captures Dummett's thought better and it does not suffer from indetermination of reference.

Chapter 3

MODERATE EXPRESSIVISM

3.1 Potts' expressive treatment of slurs

3.1.1 Two analysis for 'by the way content'

Conjunctive analysis

In "Sense and Reference", Frege proposed that the sentence:

- (62) Napoleon, who recognised the danger to his right flank, led himself
his guards against the enemy position.

should be analysed as a conjunction of two thoughts:

1. Napoleon recognised the danger to his right flank
2. Napoleon led himself his guards against the enemy position.

Frege's idea is that both of these claims are asserted simultaneously. He says:

If the entire sentence is uttered as an assertion, we thereby simultaneously assert both component sentences. If one of parts is false, the whole is false. (Frege 1960, 73.)

This point speaks for a conjunctive analysis as it coheres with the truth table of conjunction.³³

Conventional implicature analysis

The problem with Frege's analysis is that does not really account for our intuition about subordinate, "by the way" content. Imagine the following conversation:

- (63) – Napoleon, who is my uncle, will lead the charge himself.
– Yes and he needs to act now.

Here the urgency for the attack is not falsified by the fact that Napoleon is not the speaker's uncle. The point is that you can confirm the main content of the sentence while suspecting the subordinate claim:

- (64) Yes, but I doubt that he is your uncle.

This point leads to Christopher Potts' distinction between *at-issue* content and *conventional implicature* (CI) content. Potts thinks that this kind distinction also applies to derogatory expressives. Namely, a civilised person can answer to a slurring utterance

- (65) Max is a Frog.

by saying:

- (66) Yes, but there is no need to be offensive.

That is, a civilised person can confirm the at-issue content (that Max is French) but object to the conventionally implicated slurring content. The most important thing is that the objection does not falsify (65).

It is also important to notice that the expressive content has the same distinctive properties as CI content. The commonality between general CI content and expressive content is the independence from truth conditional, at-issue content.

³³This is generally the received view of the passage in "Sense and Reference". Frege sees (62) analogous to complex sentences where the glue can be words like 'although' and 'but' which are both traditionally equated with conjunction. Furthermore, he separates (62) from complex sentences where the glue word is 'because' which is usually equated with conditional. (Frege 1960, 73-76.)

3.1.2 Central properties of expressives

In his "Expressive Dimension" (2007, 165-198), Potts discusses the central features of expressives.³⁴ It seems that most of the features apply also to slurs. Furthermore, an important point is that all of the central features distinguish expressives from the regular truth conditional expressions. According to him, the following four are the central features of expressives:

1. *Independence*: Expressive content contributes a dimension of meaning that is separate from the regular descriptive content.
2. *Nondisplaceability*: Expressives predicate something of the utterance situation.
3. *Perspective dependence*: Expressive content is evaluated from a particular perspective. In general, the perspective is the speaker's, but there can be deviations if conditions are right.
4. *Descriptive ineffability*: Speakers are never fully satisfied when they paraphrase expressive content using descriptive, i.e., nonexpressive, terms.

In the following, these features are discussed in detail. I agree with points 1 and 3 with some qualification but I disagree with points 2 and 4. First, it has to be acknowledged that my disagreement about nondisplaceability concerns only slurs. I think the most convincing examples Potts gives for nondisplaceability can be given an alternative analysis. Finally, I will claim that the independence is just the expression of the thesis that the slurring term and the neutral term are co-referential, nothing more.

3.1.3 Independence

The independence property states the difference between truth functional expressions and expressives most explicitly. Potts characterises the prop-

³⁴In *The Logic of Conventional Implicatures*, Potts hints that a similar set of properties also attaches to CI content in general (Potts 2005, 153-155).

erty in the following way: “It says that we can change or remove the expressive content of a phrase without affecting its descriptive content” (Potts 2007, 168). In other words, the independence property confirms that the inference

(67) That damn Kaplan is promoted. Thus, Kaplan was promoted
is valid. Moreover, the sentence

(68) That damn Kaplan is promoted
has dual content. The content breaks down to two components:

1. Descriptive content: Kaplan is promoted.
2. Expressive content: ‘Boo’ Kaplan.

In relation to slurs, the difference is that (68) is a *sentence* with dual content and slurs are *common nouns* with dual content. But at this point, it is enough to point out that these two contents are independent of each other. (More will be said about independence below.)

3.1.4 Nondisplaceability

Potts says that expressives cannot be used to report past events. They cannot be used to *report* attitudes or emotions either (expect perhaps in direct quotation but not in indirect reports). Potts also says that expressives cannot be used to express possibilities, conjectures or suppositions. “They always tell us something about the utterance situation. This is the *nondisplaceability* property”, continues Potts. (2007, 169.) He also gives illustrations of cases which are infelicitous because of the nondisplaceability property:

- (69) That bastard Kaplan isn’t late for work. (#He’s is a good guy.)
(70) It is not the case that that bastard Kaplan is late for work. (#He’s a good guy.)
(71) #If that bastard Kaplan arrives on time, he should be fired for being so mean.

- (72) Maybe that bastard Kaplan will be late again. (#Then again, maybe he's not a bastard.)

Potts says that these sentences involve *presupposition holes*. This means that operators cannot cancel or modify the presuppositions triggered by items in their scope. (Potts 2007, 169-170.)

However, I am a bit suspicious whether the diagnosis of these sentences is right. It seems to me that (69) and (70) do not have very much to do with nondisplaceability. The infelicity does not stem from the fact the expressive utterances are taken away from utterance situation. They do not report a past event, attitudes or emotions. Neither are they used to express possibilities or conjectures. I think it is even questionable whether they express supposition. Kaplan reports that Kripke has pointed out that the expressive information is not presuppositional. The difficulty to answer 'yes' to the question in (73) is that it contains a (false) presupposition that in the past John has beaten his wife. However, the presuppositional information can be made explicit with a conditional. Both the affirmative answer to

- (73) Has John stopped beating his wife?

and its negation still presupposes that John has beaten his wife but the conditional answer

- (74) John has stopped beating his wife, if he ever did beat her.

does not contain such presupposition. However, the cancellation of expressives is more problematic. Observe, the first stab:

- (75) #That damn Kaplan was promoted, if I despise him.

is outright infelicitous. The following, however, is an improvement

- (76) (#)That bastard Kaplan was promoted, if he is a bastard.

But even that strategy does not work for

- (77) That damn Kaplan was promoted.

It seems very difficult to cancel (77) without any kind paraphrasing. But as we will see below, Potts himself admits that pure expressives are very

hard to paraphrase. My explanation for this is that with pure expressives, there is not any descriptive content to paraphrase.

Given the above, I think a much better explanation for (69) and (70) is that expressives project out from the scope of the truth functional operators. This phenomenon is already discussed earlier. In (69) and (70), I think it is clear that the truth functional negation just does not apply to expressives. However, it is not obvious that (71) is infelicitous. Let us modify it in the following way:

- (78) If that bastard Kaplan happens to be on time today, he should be fired anyway for being so mean.

I think that this sentence perfectly felicitous. It seems that there is better example of the behaviour of slurs in conditionals. It seems to me that the point is that even the *mentioning* of a slurs can be offensive, as in

- (79) If Max is a Frog, so is his partner

Here the slur can be offensive even though the sentence containing it, is not asserted. I believe that this behaviour can be explained with social aspects of slurs.

3.1.5 Social taboo -analysis

It is held here that the most convincing examples of the alleged nondisplaceability are (69) and (70) but it was also claimed that (79) can be given a different explanation. Namely, it can be explained through the social aspects of slurs. Instead of explaining the nondisplaceability with semantic properties of slurs, the behaviour is explained with social aspects of slurring of language.

Luvell Andersen and Ernest Lepore propose that slurs are prohibited words. They are taboo words and as such they cannot even be mentioned. (Anderson and Lepore 2013a, 38; see also Anderson and Lepore 2013b, 350-363.) Anderson comments their view:

[S]lurs are prohibited words whose occurrences are offensive [...]. This is a proposal not about the truth values of slurring

sentences [or about semantics in general]: rather, it is about the source of a slur's offense. Prohibitionism helps explain why offence projects out of the complement of say and quotation, why it is not challenged by denial, and why the speaker of a slurred word bears the offense [...] (Langton, Haslanger and Anderson 2012, 757.)

The taboo status can explain why slurs are offensive even in conditionals like (79). The instance of 'Frog' is offensive even though nothing is asserted in the sentence. This leaves us with the problem of how to deny slurring statements, such as

(80) Prince Charles is a Frog.

The question is that how can one deny the false attribution of being French to Prince Charles and derogation at the same time and also trying to accommodate the fact that slurs are taboo words. Here is one suggestion which is actually from tv-series 'Psych':

(81) Shawn: Now, let's saddle up and go talk to this Frog.

Juliet: He's not French, Shawn, and that term is a slur.

Juliet denies that the target is French and she also points out that the term used by Shawn is a slur and as such not be used without repeating the taboo word herself. It is held here that the social surroundings of slurs, namely the taboo status provides equally good explanation of the projection behaviour as do their semantics.

I agree with Anderson and Lepore about social status of slurs but I disagree that this is the whole story of slurs. As I develop my view, my aim is to supplement this aspect with an explanation why slurs have this status and that goes beyond social explanation. This is the main difference with my view and Anderson and Lepore's view. They claim that their view is deflationary in the sense that the meaning of word or the word itself has very little do with the explanation of derogation. (Anderson and Lepore 2013a, 26 and 43.) In distinction, my view aims to reveal genuine and substantial cognitive differences between the use of the slurring term and

the neutral term. This goes well beyond the deflationism proposed by Anderson and Lepore.

3.1.6 Perspective dependence and distancing

At this stage, it seems that only

- (82) Maybe that bastard Kaplan will be late again. (#Then again, maybe he's not a bastard.)

is infelicitous. As a result it, seems that you cannot incorporate expressives into conjectures, as Potts argued. It is claimed here that this point relates to the nature of certain attitudes and how they behave in *indirect attitude reports*. Potts starts his discussion with the following belief report:

- (83) Sue believes that Ed realises that ultraviolet invigorates the mind.

The most obvious reading of this sentence is that the presuppositional part produced by 'realise' is satisfied by Sue's beliefs. For example, Ed does not have to actually realise anything. It is enough that Sue believes it. However, things are differently in

- (84) Sue believes that that bastard Kaplan should be fired. (#I think he's a good guy.)

Here it seems that the *speaker* has the negative attitude towards Kaplan. that is why the continuation is infelicitous. (Potts 2007, 170-171.) Compare (84) with the following:

- (85) Sue believes that Ed realises that ultraviolet invigorates the mind. (But I don't think Ed realises anything.)

The contrast between (84) and (85) suggests that when it comes to indirect speech reports, expressives are *perspective dependent*. The previous sentence (84) suggests that an expressive like 'bastard' depends on speaker's perspective. The negative attitude towards Kaplan is attributed more likely to the speaker rather than to Sue, even when the speaker is just reporting what Sue said. This is the perspective dependence property. Potts says: "It is tempting to assume that the perspective encoded in the

expressive aspects of an utterance is always the speaker’s” (Potts 2007, 170).

Potts considers whether this thought could be challenged. He follows Peter Lasnik in the adoption of contextual *judge* (Lasnik 2005, 665). The judge is the agent to whom the evaluative or expressive part of an utterance is attributed. A contextual judge is

c_j for c is an individual, i.e. an element in a contextual tuple consisting of a speaker, c_a ; time, c_t ; a location, c_l ; and a world, c_w .

Given this, Lasnik discusses many approaches to the perspective aspect of personal taste. Here is one rejected by Lasnik:

$\llbracket \text{fun} \rrbracket^{w,t,c}$ = the set of things that c_j finds fun in world w and time t

Assuming that what is fun depends on the personal taste of an agent in the context c , then you could say that the above tries to capture that. However, the above cannot explain the shift in perspective. Consider the following

(86) John thinks that roller coasters are fun, but Mary thinks that roller coasters are not fun.

If we take the previous characterisation of the semantic value of fun, we are stuck with an unresolved disagreement. If we take the above characterisation, context c “is fixed throughout the semantic computation of the sentence”, says Potts and he continues: “In particular, c_j is fixed throughout the interpretation of [86].” (Potts 2007, 174.) The bottom line is that in (86) the constraint on ‘fun’ is not good. We can only interpret ‘fun’ from Mary’s perspective (according to context where Mary is c_j) or from John’s perspective (John is c_j) but we cannot shift the perspective mid-way computation which would be natural interpretation: Roller coasters are fun from John’s perspective but not from Mary’s perspective.

However, things are different with expressives. The perspective does not shift. The judge c_j is the speaker. Potts says:

This is typical of expressives: they do not shift perspective mid-computation. For this reason, I propose that we hardwire

the judge argument directly into the denotations of expressives, in the manner suggested by the (rejected) denotation for *fun* [...]

Potts concludes that as a pragmatic *default*, the judge is the speaker. (Potts 2007, 175.) This is our main thesis concerning the perspective dependence related to expressives and slurs in particular. In sentences like

(87) Tom said that those damn conservatives won.

the judge seems to be the speaker as the perspective dependence phenomenon predicts. At least, you can make a weaker claim that it is unclear whose attitude is expressed by ‘damn’ (*my* intuition says that the attitude is the speaker’s) but even the weaker claim points to perspective dependence. In normal (non-expressive) indirect attitude reports it is clear whose attitudes the speaker is reporting but this is not the case with expressive content. It is the confusion that distinguishes (87) from a standard indirect report which does not contain an expressive such as

(88) Tom said that snow is white.

Potts has pointed that a speaker *can* distance herself from the attitude conveyed by the expressive. This might be done in a number of ways. Sometimes the context can do the distancing for the speaker. He presents the following example:

(89) A CPJ report on Venezuela tells us how problems have ‘escalated’ in Venezuela under Chavez, i.e. the physical attacks against journalists under previous presidents have ‘escalated’ to Chavez calling the opposition, which includes the media, names. This is very, very serious, but I don’t think another coup attempt is called for until Chavez resorts to dramatic irony or sarcasm. But if that vicious bastard uses litotes, then there’s no other rational choice than an immediate invasion. (Potts 2007, 175-176.)

Here a blog writer takes a sarcastic approach to the CPJ report and hence the attitude expressed by ‘that vicious bastard’ is not considered to be

the speaker's. As Potts observes: "writer's general level of sarcasm is sufficiently high to shift the content of that vicious bastard away from her and onto her opponents"³⁵ (Potts, 2007, 175).

Because Hom and May say that the expressive nature of slurs is not doing any explanatory work, they simply have to deny that slurs escape the scope of truth functional operators. For this purpose they use the idea of distancing. Hom and May present a rather famous example of distancing:

- (90) I have nothing against Caucasians. But John, who has, says that you are the worst honky he knows.³⁶

Here the expressed attitude seems to be John's. So this seems to suggest that the perspective is no longer dependent on the speaker. The expressive content shifts from the utterance situation and seem to be John's attitude. In other words, the behaviour is under truth functional control. Showing that Hom and May may have a point.

Nevertheless, the crucial point is that unless some distancing is done, the *default reading* of utterances containing expressives is that the expressed attitude is the speaker's and Hom's and May's truth conditional treatment cannot change that. In fact, Potts' point never was that distancing explains away perspective dependence as Hom and May take it to be. Rather, because of perspective dependence, distancing is sometimes needed especially with pejorative expressives.

At the same time, I think there is notable disanalogy between the sarcasm of the web blogger and slurs. It seems that the web blogger's distancing is successful but it has been commented to me that things with (90) might not be so successful. Bearing in mind that the sentences starts with "I am not a racist but ..." which is a very dubious way to start a xenophobic utterance and as Williamson points out often just adds hypocrisy to xenophobia. In (90) one might ask why it is so crucial to

³⁵It also needs to be stressed that even in the above quotation the perspective does not shift midway quotation which was a general feature of perspective dependence. However, this observation is not so relevant in the following discussion.

³⁶As far as I know, the example first appeared in Philippe Schlenker's "A plea for Monsters" (2003, 29-123).

repeat Bill's xenophobic word. Surely, there could have other, less offensive, ways to convey the message. In this respect, Potts thinks that the judge is dependent on contextual parameters. If the judge is not the speaker, there has been a context-shifting and the distancing has been successful. Without going into the details of this proposal, I am content to say that the context-shift may depend on many contextual parameters. It may even depend on the rhetorical skills of the speaker: a good speaker may get away with (90) while when some less skilful speaker says it, the audience might be left with a wonder why the speaker used the slurring term. At any rate, the point I am trying to make is that with some reservations I accept Hom and May's point that even with slurs the distancing is possible although it is much harder than with other expressives. But this does not change that the default reading is that the attitude is the speaker's. To repeat Potts' point: As a pragmatic default, the judge is the speaker.

Hom and May do not address the question of default reading of most expressives. They only appeal to the cases where the distancing is already done. For example, take again:

- (91) I have nothing against Caucasians. But John, who has, says that you are the worst honky he knows.

and then take away the parts which are responsible for the distancing:

- (92) John said that you are the worst honky he knows.

The point here is that the contrast between (98) and

- (93) John said that snow is white.

is noticeable and Hom and May cannot explain away the contrast.

3.1.7 Descriptive ineffability

Potts claims that speakers are generally unable to articulate the content of expressives. That is, expressives in general manifest *descriptive ineffability*. He argues for descriptive ineffability with two observations.

First, Potts himself has interviewed speakers of several languages and only one expressive was paraphrased in a clear descriptive manner: ‘Bastard’ is a vile and contemptible person. But even ‘bastard’ is not captured correctly by the paraphrasing, according to Potts. It excludes affectionate use as in

(94) Here’s to you, you Bastard!

Furthermore,

(95) So my story begins with my X-Box ... Unfortunately, the bastard won’t open. This is the problem.

suggests that the paraphrasing incorrectly restricts the use to humans. For in (95) ‘bastard’ is used to denote X-box which surely is not a human.

Secondly, it has been reported that patients suffering from severe aphasia are still able curse and curse well. Presumably in these cases, patients suffer from diminished ability to process the semantics of natural language. That is, they have difficulties understanding and producing the propositional content of the utterances of natural language but they are still able to produce expressives and produce them without difficulties.

According to Potts, these two points suggest that “expressive content is not propositional, that it is distinct from the meanings we typically assign to sentences” (Potts 2007, 177). Given this, Potts thinks that we can ignore the possible propositional content that expressives convey. Instead, we can concentrate on the polarity and intensity of an expressive. Therefore, Potts adopts a treatment of expressives where we can evaluate the polarity of an expressive, i.e. whether the expressive is positive such as ‘sir’ or negative such as ‘bastard’. On the other hand, the treatment allows to measure the intensity of the expressive, i.e. in the case of negative expressive ‘that bastard Kaplan’, it allows to measure how much the speaker disrespects Kaplan.

Since speakers cannot paraphrase the content of expressives, it is left out in the treatment of expressives altogether. This has a far reaching consequence concerning slurs. According to Potts, slurs have dual content: descriptive and expressive. For example, the content of

(96) Max is a Frog.

breaks down to two parts:

Descriptive: Max is French.

Expressive: 'Boo' French

That is all there is to slurs. There is no room for stereotypes because, presumably, the speakers are unable to paraphrase the stereotypical content correctly. Thereby, there is a contrast between Potts' view and Hom and May's view according to which the stereotypes have a central role in the behaviour of slurs.

My objection to Potts is related to the expressive content concerning slurs. As a preliminary point, I should say that I am very much willing to go along with Potts concerning pure expressives, like 'bastard', 'sir' or 'fucker'. Indeed, I already consented in Chapter 2 that 'fucker' might be a pure expressive in the sense that it just conveys the speaker's 'boo' attitude towards the target. Nevertheless, the key point of Chapter 2 was to establish that slurs are not pure expressives. To use Hedger's contrast, they are more like 'asshole' and all sides seem to agree that the *descriptive* content of an 'asshole' is that the target is a disagreeable person. Moreover, I do not think that Potts' points about descriptive ineffability apply here. If someone uses it, then it is safe to assume that the speaker thinks that the target is a disagreeable person and to apply it to X-box would seem strange.

Putting Hedger's diagnosis aside now, the view we are building in a moment is a divergent view from Potts. It has been already established that Potts thinks that (102) breaks down to two parts:

Descriptive: Max is French.

Expressive: 'Boo' French

An important point is that the content described under the heading 'descriptive' is the semantic content of 'Frog' which means that 'Frog' and

‘French’ are co-extensional. This fact is used to explain the inferential pattern in the next chapter.

In addition to this, it will be argued that slurs come with stereotypes (*contra* Potts). But this stereotypical information need not be semantically relevant (*contra* Hom and May). The stereotypical information in (96) is something like ”Max (being French) is vulgar” or ”Max (being French) slurps red wine all the time”.

3.1.8 Jeshion: priority to attitudes

Just like Potts, Robin Jeshion thinks that stereotypes do not contribute to derogation of slurs. The main source of derogation is just a negative attitude towards the target. According to her, xenophobes just do not care about stereotypes and so the negative attitude has an explanatory priority over stereotypes. She writes:

[I]ntuitions [about stereotypes] may be overturned. Someone who finds homosexuality repulsive and homosexuals worthy of contempt, yet possesses no knowledge whatsoever of any stereotypes associated with homosexuality [...] could call someone “queer” or “faggot” while manifesting complete linguistic competence. Upon being informed of the stereotypes that, let us assume, are activated in the minds of hearers, the speaker might be appalled. She could coherently avow “I disdain those queers; anyone who would do that is sick. But I do not endorse those as the right ways of thinking about queers. I have no idea who does it, what they are like, and I don’t care. I just think those queers should be locked up.” This example is not anomalous. Much racism and bigotry is rooted simply in finding others “different” – often because of physical characteristics. (Jeshion 2013, 322.)

First, Jeshion says that her example is not anomalous but I disagree. Consider a bunch of, say, white supremacists who sit down and discuss why they hate immigrants. All of them share some negative stories about

why immigrants are worthy of their contempt but one racist does not want to hear any of it and he says: “I have no idea what they are like, and I don’t care. I just hate them”, just before storming out of the meeting. I would say that this is highly anomalous behaviour. I would say that when people are given the opportunity to get justification for their beliefs and attitudes, they very much take it. Xenophobia is not an exception.

Secondly and more importantly, I agree that much of racism and bigotry is rooted in finding others different but in that case Jeshion’s example is a bit off. The point, I assume, is that the xenophobic speaker does not find the target different, she just does not like the target. My point is that why then would she dislike the target. There must be some kind of cue that triggers xenophobia and also rationalises xenophobia. The point is *contra* Jeshion that the root of xenophobia is not just an attitude, pure and simple, but xenophobia is rooted in finding others different. Furthermore and *contra* Potts, speakers can generally express this the difference linguistically. The difference is not descriptively ineffable. It can be very idiosyncratic but still explicable. I will continue to develop this idea in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.1.9 Independence and expansion of semantics

In this Section, I will briefly characterise Potts’ expansion of semantics and I will detail the contrast with my view. Potts’ semantic story starts as usual. The semantic types are

1. e and t are descriptive types.
2. If σ and τ are a descriptive types, then $\langle \sigma, \tau \rangle$ is a descriptive type (and σ and τ are variables over descriptive types.)

But then the story gets a new development. Potts adds the following clauses:

3. t^c is a CI type.
4. If σ is a descriptive type, then $\langle \sigma, \tau^c \rangle$ is a CI type (and τ^c is a variable over CI types).

As Eric McCready points out, the independence is achieved by making sure that there are not any truth functional operations over CI types:

CI types are distinct: they are always of the form $\langle \sigma, \tau^c \rangle$, functions taking at-issue typed objects as input and outputting CI-typed objects. There is no mechanism for producing types that take CI-typed objects as input. This, according to Potts, is the reason that conventionally implicated content is independent of at-issue operators: there simply are no operators over CI content. (McCready 2010, 12.)

Just because CI types can never appear as input, there are no truth functional operations over CI types and the independence is thus achieved.

In contrast as I will develop my view, I will base my conception of independence solely on the co-extensionality thesis. Since the pair

(97) Max is a Frog.

(98) Max is French.

is truth conditionally equivalent, derogation has to be regarded as independent concerning the truth conditions.

3.2 McCready and dispute about stereotypes

McCready starts his discussion of stereotypes with Dummett's formulation of 'Boche' as 'barbarous and more prone to cruelty than other Europeans'. McCready rejects this formulation because he thinks that this is not certainly correct of the current slurs he knows. This objection implies that McCready has a rather idiosyncratic view of stereotypes. He seems to think that all slurs must come with the same stereotype which is certainly not the case. McCready moves on to another proposal made by Mark Richard. McCready says:

Richard [...] describes the expressive part of the content of pejoratives as that an individual is bad by virtue of membership in a particular group; in this case, the individual picked out by the pronoun is bad by virtue of being a German.³⁷

McCready goes on to say: “This is closer, but still cannot be correct”. (McCready 2010, 8.) According to him, Richard’s idea cannot be right because in sentences like

- (99) a. He might be a Boche.
- b. Is he a Boche?

there is no implication that the individual is bad. Rather, the speaker thinks that Germans in general are bad. McCready’s point is that the slurring content is not truth functional. Rather it is conventionally implied and this implicature is ‘boo’ Germans (in general). From this McCready concludes that the dual content of ‘Boche’ is the Germans in general and what he calls *conventionally implicated or expressive* (CIE) content. He characterises the behaviour of the two in the following way. First, he describes the descriptive content: slurs like ‘Boche’ behave more or less in terms of their basic meaning. That is, ‘Boche’ refers to Germans in general. But slurs differ in degree of approbation assigned to the *group* under discussion. My interpretation from this that CIE content is just the ‘boo’ and as McCready points out the intensity of the ‘boo’ is different with different slurs. For example, many current slurs are much more intense than the outdated slurs like ‘Boche’.

McCready’s further discussion gives support to my interpretation. In a footnote, McCready reports that the reviewer of McCready’s paper challenges McCready’s thought with two examples:

³⁷The part McCready is commenting is this:

A word is a slur when it is a conventional means to express strong negative attitudes towards members of a group, attitudes in some sense grounded in nothing more than membership in the group. A slur on Asians, for example, is a word which speakers know (and as competent speakers are expected to know) is used to insult and display contempt for Asians merely because that is what they are. (Richard 2008, 12.)

- (100) a. He's German but at least he's not a Kraut.
 b. He's a Boche but at least he isn't a Kraut as well.

The point in these examples is that the speaker seems to think that there is a real difference between 'German' and 'Kraut' in (100a) and between 'Boche' and 'Kraut' in (100b). This difference is very difficult to explain in terms of the expressive content, i.e. in terms of the 'boo'. In his response, McCready ultimately dismisses these as infelicitous after consulting some speakers (including himself). However, he consents that if these were indeed felicitous, the examples would show that

there is some content present in the pejoratives in addition to the CIE content which distinguishes the two properties; perhaps it is even the case that some of the CIE content has been reanalyzed as at-issue (McCready 2010, 22).

This is somewhat the option I am taking seriously in the following. I think that (100a) and (100b) are felicitous and they deserve an explanation. Furthermore, I think that McCready is on the right track about the nature of the explanation. I think that they can be explained with further stereotypical information which is on the basis of the 'boo'. Hence, I am giving the explanatory priority to stereotypes over the attitude. However, I need to make a qualification. I do not think that the stereotype is part of descriptive content (at-issue) content, as McCready suggests. I think it is information that attaches to slurs but it is not part of the semantic content. The semantic content is exhaustively explained with the target.

3.3 Summary

Potts spells out derogation with conventional implicature. With this strategy, slurs are not only on a par with expressives like 'bastard' but also with information which I called "by the way content". Concerning expressives, Potts introduces four distinguishing properties. They are

1. *Independence*: Expressive content contributes a dimension of meaning that is separate from the regular descriptive content.

2. *Nondisplaceability*: Expressives predicate something of the utterance situation.
3. *Perspective dependence*: Expressive content is evaluated from a particular perspective. In general, the perspective is the speaker's, but there can be deviations if conditions are right.
4. *Descriptive ineffability*: Speakers are never fully satisfied when they paraphrase expressive content using descriptive, i.e., non-expressive, terms.

These, of course, apply to all expressives but Potts holds that ethnic slurs are a subset of expressives so they do apply also to slurs. It is just that with slurs, the expressive content is derogatory 'boo' attitude. In the course of the discussion, I claimed that only independence and perspective dependence are plausible when the evidence concerning the expressive nature is carefully examined. Either there is an alternative analysis for the remaining properties (nondisplaceability) or they are just denied, plain and simple (descriptive ineffability).

Potts claims that independence property shows that there has to be a separate expressive dimension to meaning, in addition to truth functional dimension. I admit that derogation is independent concerning the truth functional dimension. However, this does not yet show that there is an additional dimension to *meaning*. Because I am committed to the co-extensionality thesis, I do have to say that derogation is independent from the truth functional aspect. Otherwise, the neutral term would derogatory too. In relation to nondisplaceability, I showed that derogation can also be part of 'social etiquette'.³⁸ Andersen and LePore argue that the social aspect of the use of slurs explains derogation entirely. I agree that the social aspect is an important point but I disagree that the social aspect explains derogation entirely. Rather, it is more likely that the social ban on certain words is a consequence of some features of the words. Just like expressivism, I claim that there is a 'deeper' feature that explains derogation but instead of arguing that the feature responsible for derogation is

³⁸As Mike Martin put it in London-Berkeley Graduate meeting in May 2016.

part of the meaning, I say that the feature is part of epistemic profile of the term.

I also discussed Potts' descriptive ineffability. I did not find his arguments convincing and neither did I find Jeshion's argument convincing regarding the descriptive ineffability of slurs.

Finally, I discussed McCready's arguments for 'boo' attitude (and arguments against stereotype) but did not find them convincing or rather more accurately I want to take the route that McCready rejected. In contrast to McCready, I think that (100a) and (100b) are felicitous and they deserve an explanation. My explanation utilises the notion of stereotype.

Chapter 4

MODERATE DESCRIPTIVISM

4.1 Varieties of moderate descriptivism

In this chapter, we will move on to moderate descriptivism. This move is a response to the criticism moderate expressivism received in the previous chapter. The main point is that stereotypes do play a part in derogation. That is the difference between moderate expressivism and moderate descriptivism.

First, I will examine Timothy Williamson's account which is a version of conventional implicature strategy. So far, we have only seen Williamson's criticism of Dummett's proposal but in this chapter we will see his positive proposal. It differs from the previous implicature strategy in one important respect. In this version, the implicature explicates the role of stereotypes. The previous version explicitly disregarded the role of stereotypes.

We will then move on to Stefano Predelli's work. His work is based on ideas Kaplan has presented in numerous versions of his talk "Ouch and Oops".³⁹ In his talk, Kaplan raises numerous apt points about expressives

³⁹As he has given this talk many times, there are many transcriptions of the talk. I am here relying on version which was transcribed by Elizabeth Coppock. The talk was a Howison Lecture in Philosophy, delivered at Berkeley.

such as ‘ouch’ and ‘oops’. He also discusses pejorative expressives, such as ‘Damn Kaplan’. I will first discuss the relevant points in detail and then continue to discuss Stefano Predelli’s treatment of expressives and especially his treatment of slurs. Predelli brings forth a *logic of expressives* which not only incorporates some of the ideas Kaplan presents in “Ouch and Oops” but it also develops sometimes sketchy ingredients in Kaplan’s paper in a detailed manner.⁴⁰

At the end of the chapter, I will begin to outline my contrast with moderate descriptivism. Although moderate descriptivism acknowledges the same ingredients as I do, there is some differences. The main difference is that moderate descriptivism concentrates solely on language. Whereas, I want to incorporate xenophobic beliefs to my view of slurs. This difference will be detailed in the next chapter.

4.2 Williamson and conventional implicature

The key point in Williamson’s account is that it acknowledges that the slurring content is CI content but at the same time Williamson’s account tries to accommodate McCready’s remark that there might be something descriptive about the slurring content.

Williamson takes the lexicographer’s account as his starting point. ‘Boche’ means German but it is a derogatory expression. That is, he subscribes to the co-extensionality thesis. Frege distinguished the sense and the reference from the tone of an expression. The sense of an expression determines the reference. For Dummett, the sense is explained with the inferential patterns of an expression. Williamson thinks that the sense of an expression is the intension of an expression. It is a function that assigns the reference of an expression (across the possible worlds). According to Frege, the tone of an expression is something that does not alter the mean-

⁴⁰This should not be taken as criticism or dismissal of Kaplan. It is just that unpublished manuscripts often are sketchy.

ing. ‘Walk’, ‘stroll’ and ‘saunter’ all mean the same, i.e. they have the same sense but they differ in tone. A pejorative term ‘cur’ has the same sense as ‘dog’. (Frege 1980, 140; see also Dummett 1973, 82-90; Neale 1999; Predelli 2013, 96-97.) According to Williamson, just like the terms ‘dog’ and ‘cur’, ‘Boche’ and ‘German’ differ in their Fregean tone. Any competent speaker would then know that both sentences “Goethe was a German” and “Goethe was a Boche” have the same truth value. So on Williamson’s view, truth conditionally, there is nothing bad about slurs. If there was, it would mean that there is something bad in the neutral term since they have the same truth conditions. Frege gives an example of

(101) that dog howled the whole night.

(102) that cur howled the whole night.

and he says of the pair:

[W]hilst the word ‘dog’ is neutral as between having pleasant or unpleasant associations, the word ‘cur’ certainly has unpleasant rather than pleasant association and puts us rather in mind of a dog with a somewhat unkempt appearance. Even if it is grossly unfair to the dog to think of it in this way, we cannot say this makes [102] false. True, anyone who utters this sentence speaks pejoratively, but this is not part of the thought expressed. (Frege 1979, 140.)

Williamson agrees with this. The badness of slurs cannot be explained with truth conditions as Hom and May tried to do. The difference between ‘German’ and ‘Boche’ is not in the truth conditions. Their contribution to the truth conditions is the same, even if it is grossly unfair to the Germans to think of them in a derogatory way, as Frege puts it. At the same time, Williamson wants to honour Dummett’s insight that ‘Boche’ associates cruelty with the Germans. Williamson also notes that Frege’s notion of tone is, as such, too vague to serve as an explication of derogation. Williamson characterises the problem in the following way:

What needs explaining is this. Competent English speakers know, or are in a position to know, that ‘German’ and ‘Boche’ have the same reference, and therefore that ‘Lessing was a German’ and ‘Lessing was a Boche’ have the same truth-value. If educated, such speakers know, or are in a position to know, that both sentences are true. Nevertheless, although such speakers are willing to assert ‘Lessing was a German,’ they are not willing to assert ‘Lessing was a Boche,’ even on reflection, unless they are xenophobes. I know that ‘Lessing was a Boche’ is true, but I refuse to assert ‘Lessing was a Boche.’ Why? (Williamson 2009, 149.)

Williamson goes on to outline his initial answer: “[T]o assert ‘Lessing was a Boche’ would be to imply that Germans are cruel, and I do not want to imply that, because the implication is both false and abusive” (Williamson 2009, 149). Williamson introduces the Gricean conventional implicature to elaborate the initial response. A classic example of implicature is words like ‘and’ and ‘but’. They have the same truth conditional meaning which in this case means that they share the same truth table. Yet they imply different things in (103) and (104)

(103) Mary is ambitious and honest.

(104) Mary is ambitious but honest.

(104) implies that ambitious people are not honest in general but (103) has no such implication. The crucial point is that since ‘and’ and ‘but’ share the same truth table, the sentences have the same truth conditions. In a similar sense, the false implication does not falsify the assertion

(105) Goethe was a Boche.

Hence, the slurring implicature is not a *logical consequence* of (105). Rather, the thought that Germans are cruel is a conventional implicature of (105). While being truth-conditionally equivalent, (105) and

(106) Goethe was German.

differ in their conventional implicature. Conventional implicature is different from conversational implicature (which Hom introduced) in that conventional implicature is detachable: it can differ between two truth-conditionally equivalent sentences. But it is not cancellable, someone who says

- (107) Goethe was a Boche but I do not mean to imply that all Germans are cruel.

merely adds hypocrisy to xenophobia. In (107), the implication produced by the term ‘Boche’ is exactly what the speaker is trying to deny: all Germans are cruel. Conversational implicatures are, vice versa, easily cancellable but not detachable. If someone says

- (108) She is either in Paris or London.

the maxims of conversation produce the implication that the speaker does not know which city she is in. But this can be cancelled by adding

- (109) I know which city she is in, but I am not going to tell you.⁴¹

According to Williamson, a slurring conventional implicature is based on Putnam’s idea of stereotype. Even though the difference between ‘Boche’ and ‘German’ is “truth conditionally irrelevant”, Williamson thinks, along with Putnam that the stereotype influences the competency of a speaker:

In the case of ‘Boche,’ one might say, in Putnam’s terminology, that cruelty is part of its associated stereotype; a stereotypical Boche is cruel. Putnam allows that stereotypes may be inaccurate; perhaps ferocity is part of the stereotype associated with the natural kind term ‘gorilla,’ although really gorillas are gentle. On his view, the stereotype for a word plays no direct role in determining its reference, but to be competent

⁴¹Similarly, in relation to Hom, if a speaker says that the dog is on the fucking couch, the conversational implicature is that the speaker is annoyed with this. So if someone responds to this by saying “Right and you think it is annoying”, the speaker can cancel the implicature by saying “No, literally the dog is on the couch where questionable sex occurs”.

with the word one must have the stereotype (Williamson 2009, 153).

As a consequence, Williamson thinks that the conventional implicature is, in a broad sense, a part of the meaning of the word. It is a part of the meaning because if a speaker does not know the stereotype, a speaker does not fully understand the word.

At this stage, two points are important. First, the implicature is not just about speaker's beliefs. Surely, if someone uses 'Boche', it can very well be true that the speaker believes that Germans are cruel. When someone uses the term 'Boche', it is legitimate to ask the speaker to withdraw the anti-German implication. But is it so easy to ask the speaker to withdraw the implication that the speaker has that belief? As Williamson says: "The false implicature is that Germans are cruel, not that the speaker believes that [...]" (Williamson 2009, 152). The belief condition is just a by-product of the implication that Germans are cruel. Secondly, the false implication in (105) is not just that Goethe was cruel. If this was the case, then there would be no problem in asserting

(110) Himmler was a Boche.

because the implication that Himmler was cruel is very well known to true. The issue is that the application of 'Boche' always has the implication that all Germans are cruel. (Williamson 2009, 149-152.) I will return to these points after the introduction of Predelli's work.

4.3 Kaplan on expressives

4.3.1 Two traditions

In his "Ouch and Oops", Kaplan distinguishes between two "great traditions of semantic theory. On the one hand, there is the "formalist tradition" which includes Russell, Tarski, Carnap and Kripke. On the other hand, there is the "anti-formalist" tradition which includes Wittgenstein, Strawson, Austin and Grice. Kaplan says that the traditions had very dif-

ferent views on how language should be approached. The formalists studied mostly idealised languages and the anti-formalists focussed on natural language and especially on context-sensitivity of natural language. “It’s from Wittgenstein that the slogan ‘meaning is use’ is derived”, continues Kaplan. (Kaplan ms.) Kaplan’s point in bringing up this distinction is to show that he himself was trained in the formalist tradition and he thought that the ‘meaning is use’ slogan was just an excuse to avoid rigorous study of logical theory.⁴² However, when he started to take interest in expressives, he changed his mind and thought that maybe the anti-formalists have a point, at least to certain extent. This point became apparent in relation to his “Demonstratives” (1977) in which he explored the semantics of indexicals. He says

I began to see the semantics of indexicals as having greater affinities with the semantics (or potential semantics) of epithets, diminutives, interjections, nicknames, ethnic slurring terms, and the like than with the paradigm of meaningfulness, things like *fortnight* and *feral* and so on – the language of science. (Kaplan ms.)

To his mind, the problem was that there was a whole host of expressions, i.e. expressives which the formalist tradition had ignored. Kaplan started to explore the difference between *semantics of meanings* and *semantics of use*. Semantics of meanings applies to words like ‘fortnight’ and ‘feral’ and semantics of use applies to expressives and interjections and such. The general method for expressives is the following. Instead of asking what, say, ‘goodbye’ means, it should be asked under what conditions the expressions is correctly and accurately used. In the following, the division

⁴²The distinction is not entirely accurate. The slogan ‘meaning is use’ inspired also the inferentialists and resulted an interest in highly formal *proof theory*. As we seen in the previous chapter, proof theory studies first and foremost the rules of inferences. It is thought that the inferential rules of natural language encapsulate use of language. This route has been taken by Dag Prawitz, Michael Dummett and their followers such as Neil Tennant and Göran Sundholm (see e.g. Prawitz 1973, 225-250; 2006, 507-524; Dummett 1991 and Tennant 2002). However, this does not change the usefulness Kaplan’s simplified distinction. His point is that when it comes to expressives, the two great traditions come closer together, as we will see below.

of labour is the following. First, we will take a brief excursion to Kaplan's ideas. The idea is to get acquainted with some of the terminology. After that, I will proceed to Predelli in the next Section. I will follow his plan in a (sometimes painfully) detailed manner because I will continue the dialogue with Predelli in the next chapter.

4.3.2 Truth and logical validity

Although Kaplan's ideas about logical validity and truth conditions of sentences containing expressives is already well established, here is a brief recapitulation. Kaplan's idea is that while truth is immune to epithetical colour, logic is not. The case about

(111) That damn Kaplan was promoted / Kaplan was promoted

points to that direction. Even though the sentences are truth conditionally equivalent, they behave differently in inferences. That is why Kaplan concludes that logical validity is not based on truth but on *information delimitation*: "For a semantic argument to be valid, there must be no information in the conclusion that is not already in the premises", says Kaplan. (Kaplan ms.) The inference from

(112) Kaplan was promoted

to

(113) That damn Kaplan was promoted

is invalid just because it adds a bit of information halfway through the inference. Namely, the information about the contemptuous attitude.

4.3.3 Expressive information

Informational equivalence

Let us look what Kaplan says about the semantic information of interjections like 'oops' and 'ouch'. On the basis these cases, Kaplan comes to

distinguish between *subjective* expression and *objective* expression. Kaplan thinks that ‘ouch’ is *informationally equivalent* to ‘I am in pain’ even though

[t]he former is a single word, an interjection, an expressive; it lacks a truth value and does not syntactically combine with other expressions in ways in which sentences do. The latter, the sentence *I am in pain*, is a sentence, it has a truth value, and it does combine in all the old familiar ways, with negation and conditionalization, and so on. But at least according to the present representation, the information, the semantic information in *ouch* is identical with the semantic information in *I am in pain*, so we may come to the conclusion that *ouch* and *I am in pain* are [...] informationally equivalent. (Kaplan ms.)

Kaplan says that the way it is put above seems to be *reduction ad absurdum* of the view he is developing. He says that interjection like ‘ouch’ is not truth functional but now he seems to be saying that it is equivalent with an expression that very much is truth functional. Kaplan dodges this reduction by saying that on his analysis, the differences between the interjection ‘ouch’ and the informationally equivalent sentence have to do with syntax, rather than semantics. “The information they convey is the same, but they convey it through different modes of expression”, says Kaplan. (Kaplan ms.) Indeed, the idea that the semantic information of an expressive can be framed in a truth conditional way will become highly relevant. It will be relevant in relation to Predelli’s notion of expressive witness which spells out the stereotypical information of a slur. You might say that an expressive witness is a way to decode the stereotypical information truth conditionally.

When we move on to discuss ‘oops’, we can see that there are similarities but there are also differences. To begin with the similarities, ‘oops’ is a interjection just like ‘ouch’. It has a truth functional counterpart which conveys the same semantic information. The counterpart is something

like ‘I have just observed a minor mishap’. “So here again we have informational equivalence between an expressive intersection and a purely descriptive sentence”, kaplan concludes. (Kaplan ms.)

Subjective and objective expressives

Most notable difference between ‘ouch’ and ‘oops’ is that ‘ouch’ is based on a state of the speaker while ‘oops’ is not based on a privileged access to the states of affairs. We then have the following distinction:

Subjective expressive expresses a state of a speaker.

Objective expressive expresses a state of external world.

The idea is that I may have a privileged access to my pain. But when I believe that I have witnessed a minor mishap, I certainly do not have a privileged access to the facts about the mishap. Given this distinction, Kaplan raises a very interesting question concerning the nature of information that the derogatory epithets like slurs contain. Is that information objective or subjective? Namely, is that is the target actually worthy of the contemptuous attitude or is the slurring information just about the speaker’s attitude? Kaplan himself thinks that with slurs that the correct notion of expressive information is subjective. However, I do not think that this is an exhaustive answer to the question and we will return to this question below.

4.3.4 Rules of use for expressives

The idea is that *rules of meaning* yield truth values for sentences. But since expressives are not truth functional, they are correct or incorrect in terms of use. That is, there are *rules of use* for expressives. The point is that the expressive content plays a part in determining the rules of use. Let us first review the correct use of ‘ouch’. The rule of use for ‘ouch’ is that a speaker utters ‘ouch’ when the speaker feel sudden pain. It is incorrect when the speaker does not feel pain. The speaker might be faking it in order to get attention and sympathy. Here we have then the

rule for correct use of ‘ouch’ and an example of a situation when the rule is broken, an example of incorrect use of ‘ouch’. Analogously, the rule for ‘oops’ is something like: ‘oops’ is correctly uttered just when the speaker witnesses a minor mishap. It would be incorrect to utter ‘oops’ if there was not a minor mishap. Kaplan gives an example of a situation where the speaker sees someone breaking a glass and the speaker says ‘oops’ but it turns out that the person breaking the glass is an actor doing a film. So it really isn’t a minor mishap but done intentionally. This would then be an incorrect use of ‘oops’.

Now we can explicitly state what the rules of meaning are and what the rules of use are. The rules of meaning apply to descriptive expressions and rules of use apply to expressives. So we have the following conditions:

An expression is *descriptively correct* (i.e. *true*) if what it describes is the case.

An expression is *expressively correct* if what it expresses or displays is the case.

‘Ouch’ and ‘oops’ are both pure expressives. So they do not have truth conditions at all. They are evaluated purely on the basis of rules of use. What about expressions with dual content like slurs which are partly descriptive, partly expressive? First, let us begin with Kaplan’s observation:

I think it is (or should be) uncontroversial that expressions of these kind have a stable, conventional meaning, or perhaps better, a stable, conventional use; we say *hello* when we meet, *goodbye* when we part. One who used these expressions in the opposite way would be making a linguistic error, an error on a par with using fortnight to mean a period of one week. Similarly, the word *honkey* is a derogatory term for caucasians, and anyone who claims to be using it in a non-derogatory sense is also making a linguistic error [...]. (Kaplan ms.)

So a slurring expression has the same truth conditions as the neutral counterpart and furthermore there are rules of use for slurs. The expression

should be uttered only if the speaker has an unfavourable attitude towards the target. That is, in addition to the descriptive content, slurs convey a contemptuous attitude towards the target and if the attitude is missing, the use is incorrect. In this sense then, lovely old lady from Croydon who uses the word ‘Frog’ uses it incorrectly. She is lovely and she has nothing against the French. It is just that she has always used this term. Just because of this, her use is incorrect.

4.3.5 Semantics of expressives

Kaplan outlines a semantic approach for the treatment of expressives. According to him, we can set up a model-theoretic framework as representing the semantic information by looking at the contexts in which the expression is used correctly.

Kaplan uses ‘ouch’ as an example. The content of ‘ouch’ is that the speaker is in pain. In this case, the semantic information of the utterance is represented by a set of contexts in which the expressive is correctly used. The correct contexts are those in which the speaker actually is in pain, not just faking it. “That set of contexts represents the semantic information contained in the word *ouch*”, says Kaplan (Kaplan ms.) These points are very important considering Predelli’s treatment of slurs. In fact, you might say that this is the corner stone of Predelli’s view.

4.4 Predelli on slurs

4.4.1 Introduction

Predelli’s *logic of expressives* utilises many of Kaplan’s ideas and also develops the ideas in great detail. Most importantly, Predelli’s logic for expressives and derogatory expressions aims to do justice for Kaplan’s insight about the inferential patterns of slurs.

My exposition relies mainly on his “From the Expressive to the Derogatory: On the semantic Role for Non-Truth-Conditional Meaning” (Predelli

2010, 164-185). However in his *Meaning without Truth* (2013, see especially chapters 6 and 7), Predelli brings forth even more detailed exposition of the logic of expressives. For the purposes here, the less detailed exposition will do just fine. Some details are picked from the more detailed work.

First, we can see some aspects of Predelli's logic of expressives in relation to sentential prefixes like 'alas' and 'hurray' and then we will move on to sub-sentential expressives such as 'damn' as in 'that damn Kaplan'. Finally, we will move on to derogatory expressives and the aspects related to slurs have our special attention. After the logic of slurs is ready, we will discuss Predelli's motivation for his decisions and the linguistic evidence backing his decisions.

4.4.2 Truth conditional semantics

Character and context

According to Predelli, the following statements

(114) Alas, Kaplan is promoted.

(115) Hurray, Kaplan is promoted.

(116) Kaplan is promoted.

are truth conditionally equivalent. Let us now quickly see the reasons behind this because those reasons will play a part in the discussion later.

In simple formalized languages, you can do semantics by assigning *constant* values to subsentential expression, such as singular terms and predicates. To put very crudely, from the semantic values of names and predicates, you can then figure out the semantic values of more complex expressions such as sentences.

However when dealing with natural language, you will inevitably encounter the context-dependent nature of natural language. This observation is especially acute with indexicals, such as 'I'. The basic idea is that semantic values are assigned with respect to certain parameters. In the

case of indexicals, the appropriate parameter is the context of utterance. A context c then is a n -tuple, formally represented as

$$c = \langle c_a, c_l, c_t, c_w \rangle.$$

That is, a context is a quadruple of an agent (i.e. a speaker), a ; a location, l ; a time, t ; and a possible world, w . (Predelli 2013, 6-7.)

Given this, the truth conditional aspects of meaning depends on the notion of *character* of the simple expressions (i.e. names and predicates). It is a function from a context to a semantic value (Predelli 2010, 165 and Kaplan 1977, 505-507). In sentences (114) to (116), the truth conditionally relevant aspects are relatively simple. For instance, ‘Kaplan’ can be represented as a constant function which yields Kaplan as a semantic value of the name in every context. Since it is a constant function, there is no real context dependence here. Things are, however, different with indexicals such as ‘I’. It can be represented as a function which yields the agent (the speaker) of c as the semantic value of the expression in any given context. Hence, the semantic value of ‘I’ depends on the context of the utterance. In a context where I say ‘I’, the character of ‘I’ yields me as the semantic value of the expression and in a context where Kaplan says it, the semantic value is Kaplan.

Character indistinguishability

The point here is that truth conditionally (114) to (116) are equivalent. All sentences turn out to be true with respect to context c if and if only, (constant) semantic value of ‘Kaplan’ is, in fact, promoted in c_w , at time c_t (Predelli 2010, 165.) So the semantic value for all sentences from (114) to (116) is

$$\llbracket \text{promoted}(\text{Kaplan}) \rrbracket_{c,w,t} = \text{T iff } \llbracket \text{Kaplan} \rrbracket_{c,w,t} \in \llbracket \text{promoted} \rrbracket_{c,w,t}.$$

In another words, the truth conditional structure of (114) to (116) is the same (See Predelli 2013, 6-10.) As Predelli points out:

[F]or any S, ‘hurray S’, ‘alas S’ are true with respect c iff S is.

It follows that ‘hurray’ and ‘alas’ share their character, namely

the non-indexical character which, given any context c , yields the identity function on truth-values. (Predelli 2010, 166.)

That means that the sentences from (114) to (116) are *character indistinguishable*. (See also Predelli 2005, 8-39.)

4.4.3 Logic for sentential expressives

Meaning and use

The statements from (114) to (116) are truth conditionally equivalent. However according to Predelli, they do differ in meaning. There is an especially strong contrast between (114) and (115). Predelli says that his aim is “that of sketching an apparatus suitable for the analysis of the characteristic aspects of the meaning of expressive prefixes such as ‘alas’ or ‘hurray’” (Predelli 2010, 164). Let us call a sentence containing an expressive an *expressive sentence*. That is, a sentence with an expressive prefix is denoted with ‘*ex T*’ while T is sentence which does not contain expressive. Let us call non-expressive sentence *simple sentence*.

As Kaplan pointed out, the treatment of the meaning of expressives can be seen as an extension of truth conditional treatment of meaning. Predelli takes this point seriously. He says that, in addition to the truth conditional aspects of language, the *use* of language can be represented as *expression-context* pairs (instead of *context-semantic value* pair). In the case of “Kaplan is promoted”, *my* use of the sentence (today the 18th of Oct) is representable in terms of (116) and of a context c containing me as an agent, the actual world and 18th of October as its parameters. The pair is then $\langle (116), c \rangle$. From this it follows that the use is true iff (116) is evaluated as true_c (true in context c). To put it in another words, the use is true iff Kaplan is promoted on 18th of October. The expression-context pair $\langle e, c \rangle$ is then a representation of a possible use of e . At the same time, it is a *proper* subclass of the class of C of contexts. Let us call this class $\text{CU}(e)$ of contexts of use for e . The class of use for e is subclass of the class C of contexts because, according to the developed framework, “all instances of language use are representable as expression-context pairs”

but the converse does not hold (Predelli 2010, 166). For example, if the pair consists an expression and a context c is such that nobody ever speaks in the possible world of c , then the pair is not a representation of any use of e . The definition for $CU(e)$ is

$$CU(e) = \{c \in C: K_e(c)\}$$

where $K_e(c)$ is an appropriate condition on contexts, i.e. *use constraint* for e . Remember that Kaplan thought that for some expressions the slogan ‘meaning is use’ is correct. In similar manner, what should be now clear is that Predelli thinks that *meaning* of sentences (114) to (116) imposes at least some of the constraints on use, in contrast to purely extra-semantic properties. It seems clear that speaker of (114) is expressing his or her dissatisfaction about the fact that Kaplan is promoted. Vice versa, there is something wrong with the use if the speaker of (114) is in fact enthusiastic about Kaplan’s promotion. In Predelli’s terms, this constitutes *defective* use. The non-defective uses of (114) are then a class $NU(114)$ of contexts. Defined preliminarily as

$$NU(114) = \{c \in CU(114): \text{at } c_w \text{ and } c_t, c_a \text{ is unhappy about } P_c\}$$

P_c is the (truth conditional) content expressed by (114) (or in fact with (116) in this case) with respect to c . In other words, (114) is used non-defectively only by speakers who are unhappy about Kaplan’s promotion in context c .

Now we are finally ready to spell out the distinction between (114) and (115). The non-defective contexts for (114) are distinct from (115):

$$NU(115) = \{c \in CU(115): \text{at } c_w \text{ and } c_t, c_a \text{ is happy about } P_c\}$$

From these clauses Predelli goes to formulate a general non-defectiveness clauses for the use of sentences containing expressives:

- (i) For any simple sentence S , $NU(S) = CU(S)$.
- (ii) For any expressive sentence S of the form *ex T*, $NU(S) = \{c \in CU(S): R_{ex}(T, c)\}$.

In general, the R_{ex} relationship has an expressive nature. It is a relation between the agent of c and the content of T in c . For example, in (115) the agent is unhappy about the thought that is expressed with T . As Predelli observes, it is very plausible that clauses for the *expressively non-defective uses* of (114) and (115) above confirm the conventional meaning of ‘alas’ and ‘hurray’. He says that only linguistically incompetent speakers employ (115) in the absence of positive attitude towards Kaplan’s promotion. This observation also confirms the Kaplanian point that the difference between the meaning of ‘alas’ and ‘hurray’ is undetectable at the truth conditional level. (Predelli 2010, 167; see also Predelli 2008, 101-104.)

Expressive witness

On the basis of the previous, Predelli draws the conclusion that the meaning of an expressive may not be represented with truth conditions, i.e. in terms of character, but more likely in terms of *expressive constraint*. This is represented as restriction on the class C of contexts. The meaning of ‘alas’ can be represented as a pair $\langle id, R_{alas} \rangle$. Here id is a identity function on truth values, R_{alas} is the following expressive constraint: for all sentences S and context c , $R_{alas}(S, c)$ iff at c_w and c_t , c_a is unhappy about the content of S in c . With the help of expressive constraint, it can be said that in order to be non-defective use in c , the content of S has to be true *and* the speaker has to be in right relation to that content. (This idea is elaborated below.)

The previous defines the class of expressively non-defective *uses* of sentences. The definition does this on the basis of two things: by appealing to the composition of $NU(S)$ and to the non-truth conditional aspects of expressive prefixes. In this sense then, it makes sense to concentrate on the class of non-defective contexts (ND) for S :

- (i) For any simple sentence S , $ND(S) = C$.
- (ii) For any expressive sentence S of the form ‘*ex T*’, $ND(S) = \{c \in C: R_{ex}(T, c)\}$

This means that c is a non-defective context for (114) iff the speaker in c is unhappy about Kaplan's promotion.

Most interesting feature of Predelli's exposition is the notion of *expressive witness*. (As we will see below, this notion explicates the connection between the stereotype and a given slur.) The definition of expressive witness is the following:

(EXW) A simple sentence W is an expressive witness for a sentence S iff_{def} $\text{true}_c(W)$ iff $c \in \text{ND}(S)$.

This is to say that for any sentence S of the form '*ex T*', W is an expressive witness for S iff the truth of W is established by R_{ex} . For example,

(117) I am unhappy about Kaplan's promotion

is an expressive witness for (114): (117) is true_c in exactly the same contexts where (114) comes out as non-defective. (Predelli 2010, 169; see also Predelli 2013, 122-124.) We can now tackle the inferential patterns of expressives.

Expressive validity

According to the truth conditional account, both

(118) Alas, Kaplan is promoted. Therefore, Kaplan is promoted

and

(119) Kaplan is promoted. Therefore, alas, Kaplan is promoted

are valid since, in both arguments, the premise and the conclusion are truth conditionally equivalent. For Kaplan this shows that validity is not based truth but on the preservation of semantic information. For Kaplan, there is only one notion of validity. It is, in fact, important to notice that Predelli introduces two notions of validity. One is *truth conditional validity* and the other is *expressive validity*. Let us call the former *validity* and, in distinction, continue to talk about the latter as expressive validity. The notion of expressive validity is obviously the one that we are interested

here. It is not defined in terms of truth preservation but in terms of *non-defectiveness preservation*. However, since the valid inference in (118) requires both, truth preservation and non-defectiveness preservation, we need a notion that reflects this. So Predelli defines a *true non-defective context* in the following way:

(TND) A context is a true non-defective context for S, $c \in \text{TND}(S)$,
iff_{def} True_c and $c \in \text{ND}(S)$.

In order to be a member of a true non-defective context, two things are required of context c . In the case of (114), c is a member of $\text{TND}(114)$ iff (i) in c_w Kaplan is promoted at c_t and (ii) in c_w and at c_t , c_a is unhappy about Kaplan's promotion. The class of true non-defective context for simple sentences is the class of c in which the simple sentence S is true_c . This is so regardless of the attitude the speaker might have towards the events happening in c . Given (TND), expressive validity is as follows:

(EXV) An argument $S_1 \dots S_m: S_n$ is expressively valid iff_{def} $\text{TND}(S_1) \cap \dots \cap \text{TND}(S_m) \subseteq \text{TND}(S_n)$

From this, it follows

A context c is a true non-defective context for S iff $(S \wedge W)$ is true_c .

Here W is an expressive witness for S (as defined in clause for EXW). As a consequence of the previous clause, we have *expressive validity in respect to expressive witness*:

(EVW) An argument is $S_1 \dots S_m: S_n$ is expressively valid iff the argument $(S_1 \wedge W_1) \dots (S_m \wedge W_m) \vdash (S_n \wedge W_n)$ is valid.

Here again W_1 is an expressive witness for S_1 . At the same time, we have *expressive validity of argument with a simple conclusion*

(EVS) Any valid argument $S_1 \dots S_m: S_n$ whose conclusion S_n is simple is expressively valid.

This is in fact the case in (118) and hence it is, indeed, valid and expressively valid. But while (119) is valid, it is not expressively valid. (Predelli 2010, 171-174; see also 2013, 122-122.)

Expressive introduction

An interesting feature of Predelli's logic is that under certain conditions one can introduce expressives and these are *truth conditions*. These can be called *expressive introduction* steps. These steps need to come out as valid and expressively valid. Take for instance

- (120) Kaplan is promoted and I am unhappy about Kaplan's promotion.
Therefore, alas, Kaplan is promoted.

Hence we have the general pattern:

$$(EX-I) \frac{S \wedge W}{\text{ex}(S)}$$

The analogy between the previously discussed introduction rules (for 'Boche') are apparent. Notably, one can see the conjunction of

- (121) Kaplan is promoted *and* I am happy about Kaplan's promotion

as the conditions for the introduction of 'alas'. However, the converse does not hold. This means that there is no corresponding elimination step for expressive introduction step. Namely, it should be noticed that expressive validity does not come on top of (truth functional) validity. It is not 'validity-plus' as the Kaplanian terminology might hint. Some expressively valid arguments are not (truth functionally) valid, as Predelli shows. For example,

- (122) Alas, Kaplan is promoted. Therefore, I am unhappy about Kaplan's promotion

is not (truth functionally) valid, but it is expressively valid. (EVS) is enough to make the inference expressively valid as the conclusion is a simple sentence but still truth functional validity fails. As it was noted, sentences from (114) to (116) are truth conditionally equivalent. Hence the premise is true_c with those contexts in which Kaplan is promoted and the expressives, 'alas' or 'hurray' does not contribute to the truth conditions. However, in some of these contexts c_a may not be unhappy about Kaplan's promotion. Thereby, the argument is invalid in contexts

where Kaplan is promoted and the speaker lacks the hostility towards Kaplan's promotion. (Predelli 2010, 171-172 and more on the rejection of expressive validity as 'validity-plus' in Predelli 2013, 122-123.)

4.4.4 Logic for subsentential expressives

As we are approaching the logic of slurs (according to Predelli), there is one more preliminary step concerning expressives to take. Slurs are obviously not sentential prefixes:

(123) #Frog, Max is promoted

is just ill-grammatical. Slurs are then closer to subsentential expressives, such as

(124) That damn Kaplan is promoted

Although these might seem like trivial and obvious observations, they are a good place to start the discussion about non-sentential expressives. The following observation might seem like an obvious one too. The expressive statements

- (125) a. Damn, Kaplan is promoted
b. That damn Kaplan is promoted

have different witnesses. The corresponding witnesses are

- (126) a. I am unhappy about Kaplan's promotion
b. I have an unfavourable attitude towards Kaplan.

So in (125a) the unhappy attitude is towards the content expressed by the whole sentence. But the speaker might not have anything against Kaplan personally. Maybe the speaker ran for the same promotion and is disappointed that she did not get the promotion. Whereas in (125b), the speaker may have nothing in stake in the promotion procedures. Rather, she has an axe to grind with Kaplan personally (with the semantic value of 'Kaplan') and (125b) expresses that. As a consequence we have the following valid and *expressively* valid inferences:

- (127) a. That damn Kaplan is promoted. Thus, Kaplan is promoted.
[by EVS]
- b. Kaplan is promoted and I have an unfavourable attitude to
towards Kaplan. Thus, that damn Kaplan is promoted.
[by EXW]

The point here is that the unfavourable attitude is directed at an object, i.e. towards the semantic value of a proper name. Predelli says that this can be extended to the case of general terms as in:

(128) Those damn conservatives won
which entails

(129) The Conservatives won

and (128) is expressively entailed by

(130) The Conservatives won and I have unfavourable attitude towards
the conservatives.

The pejorative attitude is directed towards the semantic value of the general term as is the case with slurs. However, one more observation about expressives is needed and I think this a key point. The sentence

(131) The stupid Prime Minister is re-elected

is ambiguous between an expressive and an non-expressive reading. The non-expressive reading is apt in a slightly weird situation where there is more than one Prime Minister. In this case, (131) is a good answer to the question “Which Prime Minister is re-elected?”. This reading entails

(132) The Prime minister is stupid.

In contrast, the expressive reading “bear no truth conditional relation to the Prime Minister’s intelligence or lack thereof”, says Predelli. The expressive reading is (truth conditionally) equivalent to

(133) The prime minister is re-elected,

plain and simple. At the same time, it is non-defective only in contexts in which the agent thinks that the Prime Minister is stupid. (Predelli 2010, 176.)

4.4.5 Logic of slurs

Expressive analysis or extensional target analysis

Finally, we are in a position to evaluate the right logic for slurs, at least according to Predelli. He says that the same distinction as above in (131) applies to the following:

(134) Those stupid communists are re-elected.

This statement has two readings just like (131). The point in bringing this up is that slurs seem to be very similar. They are general terms just as ‘communists’ is. So let’s take a pejorative expression such as ‘cur’ and consider the following:

(135) That is a cur.

Predelli says that the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘cur’ as a dog that is worthless and low-bred. Furthermore, the expression is always contemptuous. (Predelli 2013, 97-98). Given the above, we have two choices to analyse the sentence: non-expressive and expressive treatment. According to the non-expressive treatment, (135) is false if it is directed towards a dog which is fine example of its breed. On the expressive reading the sentence is true but defective if the speaker does not think that the dog indeed is low-bred and worthless. Let us now assume for a moment that, *pace* Kaplan, the nature of the expressive content is *subjective*. The point is that according to *extensional target analysis*, i.e. truth conditional account, the extension of ‘cur’ is a subset of dogs. Namely a subset of dogs which are worthless and low-bred. Assume that N is a pejorative expression with a structure $PEJ(n)$ where n is the neutral expression and PEJ turns it into a pejorative expression.⁴³ And let $ext_c(e)$ be the extension of e with respect to c . Furthermore, let sentence S_N contain the pejorative expression N . Finally, let *neg* stand for some negative connotation, such as low-bred or lazy. We then have the following divergence in the extension between the non-expressive reading and expressive reading:

⁴³The structure is very similar to Hom and May’s version of PEJ , but Predelli’s version does not take the original set to an empty set but to an actual subset of the original set, depending on what *neg* stands for.

(NER) $\text{ext}_c(N) \subset \text{ext}_c(n)$ and $\text{ND}(S_N) = C$

(EXR) $\text{ext}_c(N) = \text{ext}_c(n)$, and $c \in \text{ND}(S_N)$ only if c_a regards x in *neg* way.

On the one hand in (NER), the extension of the pejorative term is a proper subset of the neutral term and the non-defective context for the use of S_n is simply the set of contexts C (simple sentences are trivially non-defective and S_N is simple sentence according to non-expressive reading). On the other hand according to the expressive reading, the extension of N is the same as the extension of n . In other words, N and n are *character indistinguishable*. However, the use of S_N , which contains the pejorative expression, is non-defective only if the agent in c regards the semantic value of N in some negative way.

An important point can be made by comparing (NER) to Hom and May's PEJ. One of the problems with Hom and May's PEJ was that all its uses came out as false which just is not plausible in the face of linguistic evidence. So let now see if (NER) makes any improvement to this situation. It seems to me that (NER) might be a correct analysis for pejorative expressions like 'cur'.⁴⁴ When someone says (135), it might be appropriate to response that

(136) No, that is not a cur. It is a fine example of its breed,

if indeed the dog actually is a well-behaving and beautiful dog. But I do not think it is the right analysis for slurs. If the criticism towards Hom and May is taken at face value then in one sense the extensional target analysis is a better suggestion than Hom and May's original proposal but in one sense it is worse than Hom and May's proposal. It is better because the slurring sentence:

(137) Max is a Frog.

comes out true *sometimes*. It is true when Max actually is a member of a subset of French people, i.e. a member of a set of those French who also

⁴⁴More on the analysis of 'cur' and similar expressives in the next chapter.

have vulgar manners. However, this is also problematic as we will have difficulties in explaining derogation. Given the above the analysis, when someone points to a French person with vulgar manners and says

(138) He is a Frog,

there is nothing a civilised person can object to. The xenophobic speaker is absolutely right. The analysis at hand, so to speak, blurs the distinction between

(139) That bastard stole my car.

(140) That Frog stole my car.

The point is that, according to the analysis, there are appropriate uses of slurs, just like there are appropriate uses of ‘bastard’. However following Williamson’s example, the following two sentences should be equally offensive:

(141) a. Goethe is a Boche.

b. Himmler is a Boche.

Even though (141b) might seem to be appropriate because Himmler indeed was German and a very cruel man, Williamson points out: “the use of the word generates the xenophobic implicature, irrespectively of its position in the sentence”. (Williamson 2009, 151 and see also Predelli 2010, 179.) Not only is this problematic for a civilised speaker wanting to object to a xenophobic utterance, but it is also problematic as a representation of xenophobic speech:

In general, the use of derogatory slur does not merely attribute undesirable features to a certain individual who happens to a member of an ethnic group, but involves a certain negative connotation of that individual *as* a member of that group. (Predelli 2010, 179.)

In this sense then, it would seem that the expressive reading somewhere along the lines of (EXR) is more appropriate analysis of slurs. Furthermore, Predelli modifies (EXR) to accommodate the idea of slurring sentences as generic statements. He says that non-defectiveness could be

derivable on the basis of the speaker's attitude towards certain individuals. This idea, again, could be cashed out as a *typical* members of ethnic group. (Predelli 2010, 180.) This adding gives the slurring utterance a generic flavour.

Expressive analysis: subjective or objective information?

Kaplan considered two ways the expressive information can be construed. It is very likely that 'ouch' conveys subjective information and it is equally likely that 'oops' conveys objective information. Predelli then picks up this idea and discusses this in relation to slurs. We have been assuming them preliminarily as expressions of subjective information. Predelli's work here is again helpful as you can carve out the difference in terms of witnesses and expressive introduction. According to the subjective reading, the conditions for the introduction of

(142) Max is a Frog.

are

(143) Max is French and I regard him as vulgar.

We then have the *Subjective Information Introduction* for 'Frog':

$$\text{(Frog-SI)} \quad \frac{\text{Max is French} \wedge \text{I regard him as vulgar}}{\text{Max is a Frog}}$$

In contrast, the conditions for 'Frog' introduction according to objective reading are

(144) Max is French and Max is vulgar.

On the basis of this, the *Objective Information Introduction* for 'Frog' is

$$\text{(Frog-OI)} \quad \frac{\text{Max is French} \wedge \text{Max is vulgar}}{\text{Max is a Frog}}$$

Given the generic formulation above and given EXR, the formulation of the extension of the expressive reading, we can now formulate the respective constraint on subjective and objective reading. Let *d* be a derogatory common noun, then the constraint for subjective reading is

(SUC) In C_w and at c_t , c_a regards typical member of $extc(d)$ as *neg*.

The corresponding objective constraint is

(OBC) In c_w and at c_t , every typical member of $extc(d)$ is *neg*.

So the question is which one of these constraints applies to slurs. Predelli himself is quite unequivocal: “my sympathies fall within the subjectivist”. His reason for this that according to the framework he developed, OBC entails that xenophobic slurs “may never be employed non-defectively” (Predelli 2010, 180).

Xenophobes as competent speakers

The previous is simply an observation about the use of language, not so much a moral stand against xenophobia. For surely, there are non-defective uses of slurs. Needless to say, racist and xenophobic remarks stem out of ignorance and they are definitely unpleasant but they hardly *linguistically defective*. As Predelli accurately notes:

For one thing, racist and xenophobic attitudes are *empirically* incorrect: there is no conceptual (and, more importantly, no meaning-encoded) difficulty in supposing that membership in an ethnic or national group provides satisfactory motivation for a hostile attitude (Predelli 2010, 180).

This statement is directly at odds with Hom and May’s proposal. According to Hom and May, the xenophobic beliefs make the xenophobes, at least partially, incompetent speakers because they attach wrong truth conditions to their slurring statements. Predelli denies this. Xenophobia does not diminish linguistic competency and xenophobes *do* attach the right truth conditions to their slurring statements. With slurring terms xenophobes are able to express their hostile attitude accurately.

4.4.6 Analysis of language and analysis of xenophobia

All of the views introduced in this chapter agree that the phenomenon of slurring should be approached through language. Williamson says this most explicitly. For him, the use of slurs is an linguistic phenomenon. Williamson says:

The implicature that ‘Boche’ carries is not merely about the speaker’s psychological state. In particular, what is implicated is not merely that the speaker believes that Germans are cruel [...] Perhaps the use of ‘Boche’ does also carry the additional implicature that the speaker believes that Germans are cruel, since a linguistically competent speaker who uses ‘Boche’ without believing that Germans are cruel is being insincere; but such a belief condition would be a by-product of the simple implicature that Germans are cruel, combined with the conversational norm of sincerity; it is not the source of what is most objectionable in the use of ‘Boche’. (Williamson 2009, 151-152.)

Here Williamson explicitly contrasts two stands on slurs. The linguistic approach and what might be called an epistemic approach, according to which the slurring terms first and foremost reveal something about the speaker’s beliefs. For Williamson, slurs do reveal something about the speaker’s psychological states but only derivatively and with the help of other linguistic conventions, that is to say in a by-product manner. Kaplan has a similar thought. He explains his project towards the end of “Ouch and Oops”:

I hope my analysis will help us to see that although there may be profound epistemological insights that relate to the connection between the descriptive *I am in pain* and the expressive *ouch*, there is also a purely semantic explanation of the connection, and explanation that makes it exactly analogous to the

connection between *oops* and *I have observed a minor mishap*, a case that is free of epistemological considerations. And here, I continue my long-term project of trying to unmask semantical truths in epistemological clothing. (Kaplan ms, 18.)

Both of the quotations provide a good starting point to distinguish my project from Kaplan's and Williamson's projects. Kaplan says that his treatment of expressives is part of his ongoing project to show that some seemingly deep epistemological insight can, in fact, have a semantic explanation. That is, those epistemological truths turn out to be truths about language and its use. In this way, some seemingly deep epistemological truths are explained away. In contrast to this, I want to keep an open eye for the possibility that the use of slurring words and the use of neutral words reflect genuine epistemic differences.

Finally, Predelli has already given the reason for this stance. He said that racist and xenophobic attitudes are *empirically* incorrect but that does not make xenophobes incompetent users of language. I want to test the conjecture that a view on slurs can take on board the special features of xenophobia, such as empirical incorrectness. Because I want to hold on to Predelli's claim that xenophobes are competent speakers, the first step in this project is to admit that the epistemic features of xenophobia are *not* reflected semantically. (Of course, the notion of semantics needs to be specified and it will be done in the next chapter.) In this sense, my aim is the exact opposite to Kaplan's.

4.5 Summary

In the two previous chapters, I have discussed two moderate approaches. They both have commonalities. They both adhere to the co-extensionality thesis. This has major consequences. It rules out the possibility that derogation can be spelled out truth functionality but more importantly it, gives us a handle on the understanding of slurs. The views also agree that the most important thing with slurs and expressives in general is the

linguistic mechanism that enables to express them non-truth functionally. Williamson express this view very explicitly.

Even though the methodologies are very different between the moderate views, the goal is the same: to spell out derogation without interfering with the descriptive content. However, the slight variations become important in the next chapter. So it is useful to stress the methodological differences. Moderate expressivists and Williamson rely on conventional implicature but even within the conventional implicature strategies there are differences. Potts holds that the implicature is just the negative attitude but Williamson bases his notion of implicature on the stereotype. However, the main features of the strategy are the same. Both views hold that conventional implicature does not interfere with the main content of the sentence. Potts holds that the CI content in

(145) Napoleon, my uncle, will lead the charge himself.

is the assertion about Napoleon's strategy. If someone responds to this by saying:

(146) Yes and he needs to act now!

the urgency for the action is not mitigated even if it turns out that Napoleon is not the speaker's uncle. The same holds for expressive pejoratives according to Potts. The sentence

(147) Max is a Frog.

is not falsified if the speaker does not have an contemptuous attitude toward the Max. In similar spirit, Williamson thinks that false implicature

(148) French are vulgar.

does not falsify (147). It is true iff Max is French.

In the end, you might ask whether Kaplan's and Predelli's view is true expansion of semantics. It is an expansion in the sense that Kaplan and Predelli hold that derogation is semantic even though they both subscribe to the co-extensionality thesis. That is, derogation is part of the meaning, even though it does not affect the truth conditions. So there must

be something non-truth conditional to meaning. However, there is a big difference to Potts' strategy. Potts introduces new types to expand the semantics but Kaplan and Predelli do not do anything like that. Kaplan's insight is that the expressive dimension can be *exposed* within the existing model-theoretic framework. Since 'ouch' and "I am in pain" are informational equivalents, the correct use of 'ouch' can be spelled out with the truth of "I am in pain". Predelli utilises this idea in his work. Specifically, Predelli proposes that correct use (or non-defective use, in Predelli's terms) can be explicated in terms of truth of the description of the agent's attitude. In other words, derogation can be spelled out as a equivalence between correct use of a slurring expression and the truth of the expressive witness for the slur. The bottom line is that there is no need for expanding the semantics in term of new types as Potts proposes.

Chapter 5

GENERIC DESCRIPTIVISM

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have expressed my sympathies and also my discontent with the other views. From pure views I take the point that the use of slurs involves a mistake but I disagree that the mistake affects the meaning of slurs. From moderate views I take the co-extensionality thesis. This explains the understanding of slurs and the inferences that accompany the understanding but my affiliation with moderate views stops there. I do not subscribe to the expansion of semantics.

My major issue with moderate views is that they see the use of slurs solely as a linguistic issue. In fact, this disagreement distinguishes generic descriptivism from all of the other views discussed so far. The previous views have claimed that derogation is at least partly a semantic issue. In contrast, generic descriptivism holds that derogation is not a semantic issue. This claim follows from two central claims of generic descriptivism. First, I think that the slurring term and the neutral term are co-referential. Secondly, I think that truth conditions are an exhaustive explanation of the meaning of slurs. From this it follows that the derogatory feature does not affect the meaning of slurring words. Rather, derogation is an epistemic issue. Having said this, my methodological sympathies lie with moderate views. Particularly, I want to use the idea of explicating correct use truth conditionally as Predelli does. Compared to Potts' view, I find

Predelli's view particularly fruitful because, with his account, derogation can be spelled out explicitly as a condition for use.

Because I claim that derogation is epistemic rather than semantic, my motivations for the condition for correct use is different from Predelli's. His idea is that the expressive witness reveals the conventional semantic profile of a slur. In contrast, I think that the condition for correct use stems from epistemic features of a given slur. The basic four claims of generic descriptivism are as follows:

1. Derogation is epistemic:
 - (a) The information a slurring term subsumes is xenophobic.
 - (b) This information is responsible for derogation because the information is negative and unwarranted.

Here the key point comes from originalism. Even though originalism is first and foremost a theory of non-linguistic concepts, I think originalism still offers insights which can be applied to linguistic expressions too. Originalism severs the ties between the epistemic features of a concept and the semantic aspect of a concept. Thereby, the information that a slur contains does not have any semantic consequences. Another point is that the information attached to slurs is not only negative which seems obvious but it is also epistemically unwarranted.

2. It is conventionally recognised that slurs are non-neutral words. The non-neutrality stems from a conventional relation between the term and the target.

In the following, I will differentiate non-neutral words like slurs from neutral words like 'London'. I will also distinguish between a specific relation between a speaker and a target and a general relation between a (slurring) term and a target. Derogation is based on the latter. As I will explain, this accounts for the autonomy of derogation.

3. Derogation constrains the correct use of slurs, highlighted by the equivalence:

The use of a slur is correct iff the speaker has *negative* beliefs towards the target.

This equivalence is essential in spelling out derogation. The equivalence owes much to Predelli's idea that the correctness is explained in terms of truth (or falsity) of the attitude description. The difference is that for Predelli the correctness stems from the conventional semantic profile of a slur but on my account derogation is part of the conventional epistemic profile. However, I must admit that my task is much harder because the whole idea of a conventional epistemic profile is somewhat unconventional. It is a natural thought that whatever affects the use of a word is part of its *meaning*. In the Introduction, I distinguished two different takes on semantics and, respectively, two ways to view meaning. The aim of my project is to come up with a view on derogation that does not affect any of the mentioned takes on semantics, truth conditional or expanded. As a result, it is fair to say that on my view derogation does not affect meaning at all. I claim that there are extra-semantic features that can affect the use of words.⁴⁵ This is the case with non-neutral words. I will defend my view with a two-fold strategy. First, I will lay out my view as convincingly as possible so that the idea that some epistemic features affect use becomes plausible or even natural. At the second stage, I will put on my "Lewisian salesman's hat" and try to convince that generic descriptivism is worth the consideration because of its fruitful consequences. My idea is that the epistemic account incorporates the generic nature of xenophobia to slurs. This is integral to my claim that slurs subsume negative and unwarranted information. Here it is useful to point out that the information is not just mistaken but unwarranted. We all make mistakes. So a mistake cannot explain the offensive nature of slurs. Whereas, the unwarrantedness can, at least partly. In general, xenophobes are lazy cognisers. They attribute in an unjustified way negative properties to the target. This point can

⁴⁵I owe much of this formulation to Adam Bradley who commented my paper in London-Berkeley Graduate meeting in May 2016. Bradley's comments helped me to formulate the distinction with expressivism and also helped me to appreciate the difficulties in my task.

also explain why civilised people are reluctant to use slurs.⁴⁶

4. Slurs reflect genuine cognitive differences in comparison to the neutral terms. This claim has two notable consequences:

- (a) Even though it seems that slurs express attitudes, more comprehensive understanding of slurs is achieved if we view slurs as expressing beliefs (even if highly subjective beliefs).
- (b) The substitution principle between the slurs and their neutral counterparts fails.

4.(a) and 4.(b) are related to the consequences of my view. Because I am claiming that derogation is due to the epistemic features, it is only natural to highlight that slurs express *beliefs*, not just attitudes. At the same time, I am allowing the failure of the substitution principle. Initially, this might seem contradictory because I have repeatedly stated my adherence to the co-extensionality thesis. However, this contradiction is resolved with my affiliation with originalism. Originalists, Mark Sainsbury and Michael Tye argue that a truth-preserving substitution principle can fail even with sentences like:

- (149) a. Nobody doubts that Greeks are Greeks.
 b. Nobody doubts that Greeks are Hellenes.

((a) is true while (b) need not to be true) but their essential point is that the failure of substitution is not a semantic problem (since ‘Greeks’ and ‘Hellenes’ are co-referential and that is all there is to say about semantics of the terms). Rather, the failure is due to epistemic properties of two distinct concepts. The main idea is that even if the semantic content is the same, the mere use different concepts (i.e. the use of different vehicles or containers of the same semantic content) can lead to genuine cognitive differences which again can lead to different truth values. (Sainsbury and Tye 2012, 76-79; see also 2011, 115-121; for more on Sainsbury, see Textor

⁴⁶I owe this point to Rowan Mellor who clarified the distinction between mistake and unwarrantedness in London-Berkeley Graduate meeting.

2010, 105-118.) Similarly, my point is that the failure of the substitution principle between two co-referential terms relates to the differences between the civilised and the xenophobic cognition. This claim brings a contrast with moderate views as all moderate views hold on to the substitution principle.

5.2 Inferentialism revisited

Before we go on to lay out generic descriptivism, there are two preliminary points to be made. First we are going to revisit Dummett's inferentialism and then the affiliation with originalism is explored in detail.

I think there is an idea worth saving in Dummett's inferentialism. The idea is that it is the term 'Boche' that allows the inference from German to cruelty. Thereby, 'Boche' by-passes the usual methods for justifying your assertion. In general, the entitlement to say that someone is cruel comes from the *evidence* for the cruelty of that person. This is not the case with 'Boche'. It is the meaning of 'Boche' that licences the attribution of cruelty, not the evidence.

Williamson leaves out one option concerning the inferential rules for 'Boche'. To introduce this possibility, let us start from the beginning. On the one hand, the inferential rules for conjunction are

$$\&-I: \frac{A \quad B}{A \& B} \quad \&-E(1): \frac{A \& B}{A} \quad \&-E(2): \frac{A \& B}{B}$$

These rules are harmonious because the consequences of the elimination rule matches the conditions for asserting "A & B". On the other hand, the non-harmonious rules for negation are

$$\neg-I: \frac{\begin{array}{c} A \\ \vdots \\ \perp \end{array}}{\neg A} \quad CL-\neg-E: \frac{\neg\neg A}{A}$$

The reason why CL- \neg -E is non-harmonious in respect to \neg -I is that it unpacks the conditions for the assertion of $\neg A$ *and more*. The emphasis is on the word ‘more’ because that is responsible for the non-conservative extension. Williamson’s reconstruction of the rules for ‘Boche’ does not quite capture this idea. The original Boche-E does not satisfy the idea that a non-harmonious elimination rule unpacks *the conditions for the introduction of the term* and more. When it comes to Boche-E rule, the emphasis is on unpacking the conditions for the introduction of the term because Boche-E does not do that. Williamson’s original rules are

$$\text{Boche-I: } \frac{x \text{ is German}}{x \text{ is a Boche}} \qquad \text{Boche-E: } \frac{x \text{ is a Boche}}{x \text{ is cruel}}$$

Boche-E rule does not fulfil the idea that you can go back to the starting point. Instead of the starting point you get something very different. To honour the idea that with a non-harmonious elimination rule you get the conditions for the introduction and more, we might formulate the elimination rules in the spirit of rules for conjunction:

$$\text{Boche-I: } \frac{x \text{ is German}}{x \text{ is a Boche}}$$

$$\text{Boche-E(1): } \frac{x \text{ is a Boche}}{x \text{ is German}} \qquad \text{Boche-E(2): } \frac{x \text{ is a Boche}}{x \text{ is cruel}}$$

Here we have a two-part elimination rule which not only get you back to where you started (x is German) but also gives you something extra (x is cruel). I think this represents Dummett’s thought better than Williamson’s original rules. (Even though Williamson’s proposal captures perfectly the thought Dummett expressed in the quotation, it does not capture the general outline of Dummett’s argument against CL.)

Williamson actually proposes something very similar in “Blind Reasoning”. He says that you might suppose that “‘Boche’ refers to a conjunctive property of being both cruel and German” (Boghossian and Williamson 2003, 260). The problem with the original rules is that the determina-

tion of reference is indeterminate between the set of German people and the set of cruel people but this does not capture the xenophobic thinking. Xenophobes do not think that Charles Manson is a ‘Boche’ because he is cruel. ‘Boche’ is first and foremost German, not any cruel foreigner. Xenophobes do not think that ‘Boche’ is indeterminate in this way. Williamson says that the conjunctive proposal has the advantage that it counts “Nero was a Boche” as false and “Nero was not a Boche” as true. However, Williamson claims that the conjunctive rules are disadvantageous “since it counts ‘Lessing was a Boche’ literally false and ‘Lessing was not a Boche’ as literally true” (Boghossian and Williamson 2003, 261). This claim suggests that Williamson is assuming two things. First, it seems that Williamson is assuming that the exact form of the rules is:

$$\text{Boche-I(C): } \frac{x \text{ is German \& } x \text{ is cruel}}{x \text{ is a Boche}}$$

$$\text{Boche-E(C): } \frac{x \text{ is a Boche}}{x \text{ is German \& } x \text{ is cruel}}$$

The second assumption is that both xenophobes and civilised people agree that Lessing is not cruel; therefore Lessing cannot be a ‘Boche’ according to Boche-I(C) and -E(C) rules. I agree that the conjunctive rules are far from satisfying. The problem is that they tally with Predelli’s extensional target analysis and that analysis was already ruled out. The extensional analysis does not capture xenophobic thinking. More importantly, as a civilised speaker you cannot object to a xenophobic assertion

(150) Himmler was a Boche.

because the xenophobe is right: Himmler was German and cruel just like the extensional target analysis suggests. The conjunctive rules have the same problem. They count

(151) Lessing was a Boche.

as false but count (150) as true. It is for this very reason my proposed rules (Boche-I, Boche-E(1) and Boche-E(2)) start with “x is German” and the elimination rules get you back to the starting point but also give something more. The rules start with someone who is German and then allows the inference that that person is a ‘Boche’. After that the elimination rule allows you to go back to the fact that that person is German but it also smuggles in the idea that that person is cruel (just like Williamson’s conventional implicature does). For Dummett the inference is part of the *meaning* of ‘Boche’. It is the very meaning of ‘Boche’ that allows the inference from being German to cruelty, not the actual evidence at hands. Compared to Williamson’s suggestion, I think this is the key part in Dummett’s suggestion. The meaning of ‘Boche’ allows one to infer that the target is cruel without any evidence for the cruelty of the target. On Dummett’s account, it is the unwarranted nature of inferences involving ‘Boche’ that makes the concept bad.

Concerning the following, there are two notable points. First, Dummett introduces the idea that slurs come with unwarranted information. I am going to argue that unwarranted information is an essential part of derogation. Predelli noted that slurs express xenophobia and xenophobia is no doubt empirically mistaken. I am going to argue that it is not just a mistake but the unwarranted nature of the information that is partly responsible for derogation. A simple mistake cannot be offensive as we all make mistakes. It is more like the epistemic laziness that partly produces the entitlement to be offended. At the same time, I agree with Williamson that the stereotype of cruelty is not part of the truth conditional meaning of ‘Boche’ and on my account truth conditional meaning is the only meaning there is. This means that the task at hands is to explain how ‘Boche’ allows the inference from German to cruelty even if cruelty is not part of the meaning.

The second point is that Dummett concentrates on xenophobic thinking. He is aiming to explicate the xenophobic mindset. Williamson says that for his approach, it is crucial that language has priority over thought. Conventional implicature is a feature of language, not thoughts. In con-

trast to this, I will take it that xenophobic *thinking* plays a crucial part in derogation. An important step in detailing both of these points is my affinities with originalism.

5.3 Originalist view of concepts

5.3.1 Concepts as containers of information

According to Mark Sainsbury and Michael Tye, concepts are not individuated by their referents nor by their sense. They are distinguished by their origin. The motivation for originalism is that “originalism combines the best features of Fregean and Millian views” (Sainsbury and Tye 2012, 57). On the one hand, originalism sympathises with the Millian view in that one can think of objects simply as such. Fregeans think that we can acquire knowledge of objects only through some property of an object to which the descriptions refer to. But Millians struggle with the so-called Fregean data. Since Millians hold that the content of an expression is its referent, Millians find it hard to explain what the difference is between co-referring expressions such as ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’. Fregean theory offers the explanation that although they are co-referring, they have different senses. Originalism, on the other hand, explains the difference with origin. Since concepts are not individuated by their content but by their origins, the originalist can say that *HESPERUS* and *PHOSPHORUS* are different because they have different origins.⁴⁷ I agree that origin is one way to individuate concepts. It seems to me that origin provides a way distinguish concepts when there are no semantic differences but I am not too sure about Sainsbury and Tye’s motivations. For one thing, the fact that originalism allows to “think of objects simply as such” does not seem very important. This applies mainly to proper names but it is difficult to see what the benefit of this view is concerning predicate terms. In a slurring sentence

⁴⁷Here I emphasise the earlier point that even though Sainsbury and Tye prefer to talk about (non-linguistic) concepts, I believe that their point applies also to linguistic expressions.

(152) Max is a Frog,

Max is already thought of in a certain way and that, I will claim, is the whole problem with slurs. On the basis of this point, it seems obvious that my motivation to go with originalism lies elsewhere. I find two points in originalism motivating. First, Sainsbury and Tye write:

[C]oncepts are to be individuated by their historical origins, as opposed to their semantic or epistemic properties. Distinct concepts have different origins, and may not differ intrinsically. [...] Individuating concepts in a non-epistemic way makes them available as independent sources of explanation for epistemic features. Individuating concepts in a non-semantic way shows that the explanation does not rely on semantic properties of the concepts themselves. (Sainsbury and Tye 2012, 40.)

When they say that concepts are not individuated by semantic means, Sainsbury and Tye disagree with the Millian view. When they say that concepts are not individuated by epistemic means, they disagree with the Fregean view. Concepts are distinguished by their origin. This move distinguishes any slurring term or concept from its neutral counterpart. For example, the slur ‘Frog’ has a different origin than the neutral term. As Sainsbury and Tye say, this yields an independent source of explanation for epistemic features. In short, the motivating point is that originalism cuts the ties between the semantic and the epistemic aspects of concept use. Secondly, despite their disagreement with Millians and Fregeans, originalism holds a role for both the Millian content and the Fregean information. Sainsbury says:

Individual concepts subsume information. That is their role: to enable their possessor to organise information into object-sized packages [...] In the normal case, a subject subsumes some information under a [...] concept by entertaining a thought, concerning the referent of the concept, if any, and

concerning the properties specified by the information, if any, that the former possesses the latter. (Sainsbury 2005, 222 and also 111.)

The function of a concept is to store information *about* the object it has as its referent. In the following, I will develop an account that sees derogation in the information that slurs subsume. This information is stereotypical information about the target. Furthermore, I agree with originalism that this information does not have any semantic consequences.

5.3.2 Originalism and understanding

Kripkean and Putnamian stories

Putnam also recognises the importance of both aspects. According to him, there are two stories to be told about the understanding of names. Let us call these a Putnamian view and a Kripkean view for simplicity, even though the Kripkean view might not tally with Kripke's real view. Rather, the Kripkean view is Putnam's interpretation of Kripke's view. Putnam says that in the Kripkean view "the key idea is that a person may use a proper name to refer to a thing or a person even though he has no true beliefs about X". Putnam's take on the Kripkean view is that a competent speaker only needs to know the referent of the name but she does not need to have any true beliefs about that referent. (Putnam 1975, 203.)

Putnam distinguishes his own view from the Kripkean view. In "Reference and Explanation", Putnam says against his interpretation of the Kripkean thought:

I do not feel that one should be quite as liberal as Kripke [...] [U]nless one has some beliefs about the bearer of the name which are true or approximately true, then it is at best idle to consider that the name refers to that bearer in one's idiolect. (Putnam 1975, 203.)

According to Putnam, a speaker has to have true beliefs about the bearer of the name (or approximately true). Putnam exemplifies his position with an example. He does not see very much point in saying that someone is referring to Quine when the speaker uses the name ‘Quine’ and the speaker thinks that ‘Quine’ was a Roman emperor, and that is all the speaker ‘knows’ about Quine. (Quine 1975, 203.) In such cases, the term ‘Quine’ does not refer to anything in the speaker’s dialect.

In “The Meaning of ‘meaning’”, Putnam switches to talk about stereotypes instead of true beliefs and, as it was noted earlier, stereotypes can be inaccurate. Still, Putnam requires that a speaker needs to know a stereotype of a term in order to master that term. According to his “view someone who knows what ‘tiger’ means [...] is required to know that stereotypical tigers are striped”, says Putnam (1975, 250). Stereotypes have an important role in Putnam’s *division of linguistic labour*. Roughly, it divides the linguistic community broadly to *experts* and *consumers*⁴⁸. A consumer needs to *acquire* the stereotype of gold, in order to use it. However, the consumer need not to acquire a *method of recognising* gold. That is, the consumer needs to know some conventional facts about gold, such as it is yellow and shiny. But the speaker need not be able to distinguish gold from other similar precious metals. If it was the responsibility of a competent speaker to recognise gold, then anyone who ever bought a fake gold necklace would be an incompetent speaker, which seems a rather odd view. In the task of recognising gold the consumer can rely on “a special subclass of speakers”, the experts. It is the experts that can tell the consumer which kind of features are necessary and sufficient for the membership in the extension of a common name. That is, the experts tell which facts about gold are important. These features could be called criteria for a membership. They provide the criteria to recognise if something is in the extension. A collective body of language use divides the labour to expert knowledge of the words and to the transmission of that knowledge to the consumers. (Putnam 1975, 227-228.)

In connection with common names, a crucial notion in the transmission

⁴⁸The term ‘consumer’ is from Gareth Evans (1982, 377).

of the knowledge is the stereotype. Stereotypes capture the relevant facts about the referents of common names but they can be also inaccurate. In a linguistic community, the method of passing on the meaning of words is often through descriptions (instead of ostensive definition). The descriptions are then standardised. They provide information about a typical or a ‘normal’ member of the set which is the reference of a given common name. Putnam calls these standardised descriptions of stereotypes. He even says that these stereotypes can be more important than the actual referent. Sometimes the knowledge about the stereotype is enough for the understanding of a term. (Putnam 1975, 230.) However, Putnam’s view should not be equated with the Fregean view. The description does not fix the reference of a term as Fregeans claim. Rather, in order to be competent user, the user needs to have beliefs about the stereotypical member of the kind. In other words, an ordinary user needs to know the stereotype circulating in the linguistic community.

Liberal originalism

With the two stories, we can see the liberalism of originalism concerning understanding. In a nutshell, it is even more liberal than Putnam’s interpretation of the Kripkean view. When it comes to stereotypes, originalism adheres to Putnam’s interpretation of the Kripkean view and when it comes to the referent, originalism adheres to the Putnamian view. The upshot is that neither knowledge of the referent nor knowledge of the stereotype is necessary, according to originalism.

Originalism opposes Putnam’s Kripkean view that the competency consists in the knowledge of the referent of the concept. Sainsbury and Tye give us a familiar example: the concept THE PRESENT KING OF FRANCE. This concept is empty. There is no object to which it refers to. So even though a speaker does grasp it, she cannot apply it to any object (correctly in the Kripkean sense). In the case of empty names, the speaker is competent even when she cannot apply it any object.

Originalism also opposes to the Fregean view that the competency consists in a possession of a crucial belief (or a set beliefs) about the

referent. Again, Sainsbury and Tye give an example. The ‘cognitive content’ of GOLD consist of various properties which allow to identify gold, such as shiny, yellow, malleable. They further say that the Fregean view holds that these properties are necessary and sufficient conditions for something being gold. Sainsbury and Tye say that they find it hard to take this claim seriously. “The features proposed are contingent and not necessarily known to users of the concept; originalists find no place for them in a theory of concepts”, they continue (Sainsbury and Tye 2012, 82). Sainsbury and Tye conclude:

A way to highlight the difference between originalism and more familiar approaches is this: we have no room for a notion of the “correct” use of a concept (unless this means using a concept in a true judgment). [...] [F]or originalism there is simply the question whether a subject uses or does not use a concept on an occasion. If it is used at all, then it is used ‘correctly’ (as other theorists conceive this). Whether or not it is used in the making of a true judgment is another question. (Sainsbury and Tye 2012, 85.)

This passage makes it clear that Sainsbury and Tye reject any kind of specification on use, Kripkean, Putnamian or Fregean. In their words, if a concept is used at all, it is used correctly. It is usually thought that the ability to use a concept correctly entails the understanding of the corresponding term. If we go with this thought, then originalism is extremely liberal in attributing understanding of words. It seems that understanding comes automatically when a speaker is included in the community which uses the word. There are no other criteria for understanding.

5.3.3 Conservative generic descriptivism

The previous section shows that originalism is extremely liberal in attributing competency to concept users. If a concept is used, it is used correctly. So presumably mere use of words reflects full understanding of words. When it comes to the understanding of slurs, I take a step to

a more conservative direction. In fact, I will make concessions to both directions, to the Millian direction and to the Putnamian direction. I agree with Sainsbury and Tye that speaking truth and competency are two different things. The falsity of

(153) Prince Charles is a Frog.

does not make the speaker incompetent user of ‘Frog’. However, the linguistic evidence has shown so far that the understanding of slurs can be explained with the co-extensionality thesis. Furthermore, Williamson pointed out that even the xenophobic use restricts the application to the *target*. A xenophobe might utter:

(154) Charles Manson is cruel like a Boche but he is not a Boche; he is American.

The plausibility of this utterance confirms that the target is an important aspect in the understanding of slurs. So if a speaker systematically followed the *stereotype* instead of the target in the application of his slurring words, it would be difficult to attribute to that speaker a full understanding of her words. Following Williamson’s terminology, it can be said that there is an asymmetry between the target and the stereotype: Only the target explains the truth conditional aspect of meaning, the stereotype does not contribute to this in any way. In other words, truth conditional semantics of ‘Frog’ is explained by the fact that it applies to the set of French people.

On the other hand, I agree with Kaplan’s and Predelli’s view that there are correct and incorrect uses of slurs. If the lovely old lady from Croydon has nothing against the French but uses the term ‘Frog’ to talk about the French, then she is using the term incorrectly. I claim that the use is correct iff the speaker has *negative beliefs* about the French. Broadly speaking, the resulting view is Putnamian. The speaker has to know the contribution of the stereotype of a slur. (This is a rough estimate and it is specified below.)

5.4 Epistemic account of slurs

5.4.1 Simple semantics

In the following, there are two things to keep in mind. First according to generic descriptivism, derogation can be captured with an epistemic profile of a slur. derogation is due to the *negative information* that is attached to slurs. The current view differs from expressivism in that generic descriptivism sees derogation as a cognitive matter. In this sense, slurs may differ from other expressives. Slurs contain negative information and that information is epistemically *unwarranted*.

Secondly, I agree with expressivism that derogation is channelled through conventional features of slurs but I disagree about the nature of these channels. Expressivism holds that the derogatory part is expressive and derogation is spelled out in semantics which is designed to handle non-truth functional semantic information. In contrast, generic descriptivism says that truth functional semantics is the whole story about the semantics of slurs. Thus, derogation is framed epistemically and this epistemic framework does not entail anything semantic (as predicted by originalism). Even though the epistemology of slurs does not influence the conventional *meaning* of slurs, it does influence the conventional *use* of slurs. Generic descriptivism has at its disposal, at least, some of Predelli's ideas. Most notably, generic descriptivism makes use of the idea of a witness.

As a reminder, Predelli introduces the notion of expressive witness. This notion is important in specifying the non-defective use of slurs. Non-defective use coincides with contexts where the expressive witness is true. Hence, Predelli puts forward an equivalence between non-defective use of an expressive and truth of an expressive witness. Here is a simplified and general version of the equivalence:

The use is non-defective in context c iff the agent's attitude description in context c is true.

The key point is that non-defectiveness or correctness is explained in terms of truth (or falsity) of the attitude description. For example,

(155) I am unhappy about Kaplan's promotion.

is an expressive witness for 'alas'. In

(156) Alas, Kaplan is promoted,

the use of 'alas' is non-defective or correct (in context c) iff (155) is true (in context c). In the following, I will develop something similar. I will argue that there indeed is a condition for correct use of slurs but it does not stem from the semantic profile of slurs. Rather, the condition stems from the epistemic features of slurs. First, for our purposes a very simple semantics will do. So let us just say that the relevant categories of a very basic language are names and predicative expressions (more accurately, n -place predicates but for our purposes one-place predicates are the most important since slurs are like that). The relevant syntactic rule of formation is

1. If δ is a one-place predicate and α is a name, then $\delta(\alpha)$ is a sentence.

The sentence

(157) Max is a Frog.

is formed on the basis of this rule. The semantic rule that corresponds to syntactic rule 1 is the following:

1. If δ is a one-place predicate and α is a name, then $\delta(\alpha)$ is true iff $\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket \in \llbracket \delta \rrbracket$

An important point is that the semantic rule imposes (only) that the semantic values of one-place predicates are sets.⁴⁹ In conjunction with the co-extensionality thesis, the semantic clause brings about the following explanation

(158) "Max is a Frog" is true iff Max is a member of the set of French people.

⁴⁹These formulations can be found in any elementary logic textbook but I followed *Introduction to Montague Semantics* (Dowty, Wall and Peters 1989, 14-53).

Because it is argued here that derogation does not affect semantics, generic descriptivism can do with very crude semantics. A noticeable difference with Kaplanian view is that there is no room for a character and because the character is a function from context to semantic value, the notion of context is somewhat redundant. There is only the actual world as a relevant point of evaluation. As Sainsbury and Tye note: "if a [...] concept lacks a referent with respect to the actual world, any atomic thought containing it is false" (Sainsbury and Tye 2012, 49).

5.4.2 Correct use of slurs

Spelling out derogation

The point in generic descriptivism is that the use of slurs display genuine cognitive difference in comparison to the neutral terms. Conventionally, slurs subsume negative information while the neutral terms do not. You can express the very same negative beliefs with a neutral term but when a speaker uses a slur like 'Frog', it is expected that the speaker has negative beliefs about the target, such as "the French are vulgar". Since the use of slurs does not have any semantic consequences, the notion of correct use is very much connected to the expectations of the audience. When slurs are used, it creates an expectation that the speaker holds a negative opinion about the target. If the speaker does not hold a negative view of the target, the use is incorrect and the neutral term would be more appropriate.

Following Predelli and on the basis of the foregoing discussion, I propose to spell out derogation as a condition for correct use. The following equivalence explicates the connection with derogation and the use of slurs:

The use of a slur is correct iff the speaker has negative beliefs about the target.

Even though generic descriptivism does not recognise any expansion of semantics beyond truth, the equivalence utilises not only Kaplan's idea that 'ouch' and "I am in pain" express the same information but even

more so it utilises Predelli’s core idea that you can explicate non-defective (or, in my terms, correct) use in a truth functional manner. That is why the equivalence holds regardless of the truth value of the utterances. In

(159) Prince Charles is a Frog,

the hearer expects that the speaker has negative beliefs about the French even when the statement is false. The expectations stem from the notion of correct use of the term ‘Frog’ but correct use has nothing to do with truth or falsity of the statement.

There are two explicating points to be made. First point is that, in the equivalence, I have dropped the part about the unwarranted nature of the beliefs. This is because in the current state even a xenophobe could agree with the condition. The reason for the xenophobe’s choice of words is that she wants to express her negative opinion about the target but she would hardly agree that her beliefs are unwarranted. Secondly, it should be emphasised that the equivalence holds *in general* as in “generally it is the case that *the use of a slur is correct* iff the speaker has *negative* beliefs about the target”. This sets a limitation on my view. Because the equivalence does not characterise the *meaning* of slurs, the equivalence is not categorical like it is categorical that a bachelor is an unmarried man. Rather, the equivalence is more analogous to inductive reasoning like “usually swans are white”. Presumably, the view should have some exceptions like the in-group use but, in general, the use of a slur is strong evidence for the fact that the speaker views the target in a negative way. Furthermore, the *hearer’s knowledge* of the speaker’s negative beliefs is based on the stereotypes.⁵⁰ The second point is further elaborated next.

Nature of derogation

Even though my account follows Predelli in the way derogation is spelled out, there are some substantial qualifications to be made. To repeat, the differences stem from the fact that moderate views see slurs primar-

⁵⁰The point about generality was quite rightly emphasised by Adam Bradley and Rachel Rudolph.

ily as linguistic items which express non-truth conditional information. Whereas, I want to connect the nature of that information to my account. Namely, I aim to study slurs as expressions of xenophobia. Slurs are derogatory because they express xenophobic beliefs. Consider the possibility that the use of slurs reflects the speaker's *beliefs* about the target. The expressive witness is based on an appropriate relation between the speaker and the target. I very much agree that the use of a slur does mark of a special relationship between the speaker and the target. However, I aim to come up a view that also recognises that the relationship between the speaker and the target is a result of xenophobia.

We all have beliefs about the referents of our words. As Sainsbury and Tye say, the function of a concept is to store information about the referent. We all have beliefs about London: “London is big”, “London is cool”, “London is dirty”. Some people may have a negative opinion about London but an utterance like “I am going to London” does not reflect that. Sainsbury and Tye make a distinction between a concept and a *conception*. Sainsbury and Tye illustrate the situation with an example. They think that they and the reader share the concept AUSTIN. However, “[i]f you think that Austin is the music capital of the world and we disagree, we think a thought that conflicts with yours, and this is again explicable in terms of our sharing the concept AUSTIN” (Sainsbury and Tye 2012, 21). A conception is often idiosyncratic and hence a conception is not a part of the (truth conditional) semantic profile of a concept. It is my contention that the derogatory aspect of slurs stems from the conception of the target. Observe a preliminary distinction between:

A speaker specific belief about the target

and

A general relation between a term and a target.

Here a speaker specific belief coheres roughly with a conception and a general relation between a term and a target stems from this. But still a general relation must be distinguished from speaker's idiosyncratic beliefs

about the target as the general relation coheres with the stereotype. Three interrelated points are notable.

First as Predelli notes, the constraints on the logic of expressives stem from the conventional meaning of expressives like ‘alas’ and ‘hurray’:

[F]or instance, only linguistically incompetent speakers employ [‘Hurray, Tony will be re-elected’] (at least non-ironically) in the absence of a positive attitude towards Tony’s future victory” (Predelli 2010, 168).

I agree that with some words, the correct use goes beyond its truth conditional semantics. Sometimes there can be a significant consensus regarding the speakers’ beliefs about a target. This is specifically noticeable with a slur like ‘Boche’.⁵¹ I think it is not a surprise that there was a rather strong consensus among the French soldiers that their enemy was cruel and barbarious. War is like that. The consensus was captured with a new epithet for the Germans. Even now a speaker using the slur ‘Boche’ is expected to have these negative beliefs about the Germans. But these expectations are not reflected in terms of (truth conditional) meaning. Rather, the negative beliefs are reflected by the *correct* use of the word.

Secondly, it is plausible that the xenophobic beliefs can be very idiosyncratic (just like some of my beliefs about London can be idiosyncratic). So the exact nature of the specific belief state is a speaker-relative notion. That is why there is a need for a more general formulation which just states that the use of a given slur indicates that the speaker has *negative* and often biased beliefs about the target but the exact nature of the beliefs is down to a specific belief state. However, correct use is based on the general relation between the slur and the target. Respectively, let us distinguish between

A neutral term which is *not* associated with a general relation.

and

A non-Neutral term which *is* associated with a general relation.

⁵¹I am using ‘Boche’ as an example because the origin of the slur quite well known.

Only some words like ethnic slurs are non-neutral because a general non-neutral relation is associated with them. A neutral word like ‘London’ is not associated with a general relation, even though most speakers have beliefs about London. The reason for non-neutrality is the stereotypical conception of the target. In the xenophobic circles, the stereotypical conception became an integral part of the way the target is viewed and the use of a slur reflects this. Even if the speaker has very idiosyncratic reasons to use a slur and the speaker is ignorant about the stereotype, the use of a slur reflects the stereotypical view of the target.

The third point ties the distinctive epistemic nature of derogation to the notion of correct use. So far, I have argued that the use of a non-neutral word yields evidence about the epistemic stance of the speaker. The equivalence reflects this. I also argued that the equivalence holds generally because the nature of the equivalence is epistemic, not semantic. In contrast, Williamson and Predelli both hold that a stereotype is a part of the meaning of a slur. If my view is at all plausible in that the stereotype of a term coheres with a general relation between a term and a target, then it might also be plausible that a stereotype of a non-neutral word like a slur is not part of the (truth conditional) meaning. Rather, it is an epistemic feature of a slur. To use an analogy, you might say that the fact that the term ‘eggplant’ is used by the Americans (instead of ‘aubergine’) is close to what I call an epistemic feature of a term. The fact that ‘eggplant’ is used by the Americans does tell something about the speaker. Similarly, the fact that the speaker uses a slur does tell something about the speaker, namely that the speaker is a xenophobe. But neither facts, the fact that ‘eggplant’ is used by the Americans nor the fact that slurs are used by xenophobes, are semantic facts.⁵²

Respectively, there are at least three advantages in basing derogation on the general relationship between the term and the target. First, we can make sense of the idea that derogation is autonomous. The derogatory

⁵²I owe the analogy between the use of eggplant and slurs to Adan Bradley. I also need to make clear that he presented some reservations about the analogy. Specifically, he was sceptical whether the fact that the Americans use the term ‘eggplant’ is a genuine epistemic feature of the term.

intentions are based on the speaker specific beliefs and the autonomous derogation is based on the general relation. Just because we are interested in the autonomous aspect of derogation, the general relation is more important to us.

Another advantage is that the current view can explain the connection between the transmission of xenophobia and slurs. There are slurs which come with well established stereotypes: a ‘Boche’ is thought to be cruel, a ‘Frog’ is vulgar. In many cases, the specific belief state and the general relation coincide but the crucial use is the one where they do not coincide. Consider a speaker who thinks that ‘Frogs’ are, say, shoplifters and thinks that that is why ‘Frogs’ deserve the derogatory opinion. It would be hard to say that the speaker is incompetent, i.e. that the speaker does not know what ‘Frog’ means. This is exactly why Jeshion’s point is so compelling. To remind, Jeshion’s point was that a xenophobe does not care about the stereotype but rather just wants to express his or her negative *attitude* towards the target. The use of slurs involve so many idiosyncratic beliefs that the negative attitude is the only common ground for the use of slurs. Still, I disagree with Jeshion and I think her example is somewhat implausible. Jeshion’s point is that slurs are based on unarticulated attitudes like hatred, fear or anger and no stereotype can change this. That is, no predication of a property (negative or positive) affects the attitude. I find this implausible. To illustrate the difference between Jeshion’s thought and mine, two examples can be presented. First, a xenophobic conversation according to Jeshion:

- (160) Jill: I think those Frogs are such shoplifters!
Bill: Oh really, I thought Frogs are usually thought to be vulgar.
Jill: I don’t care what they are like, I just don’t like them!

I still think the example is a bit weird. To me, the following xenophobic conversation seems much more plausible:

- (161) Jill: I think those Frogs are such shoplifters!
Bill: Oh really, I thought Frogs are usually thought to be vulgar.
Jill: I knew it, they are vulgar shoplifters!

In this example, the idiosyncratic belief is a stepping stone to incorporate more conventional stereotypes to ‘Frog’. In this sense, the initial belief is not irrelevant. Neither is the subsequent conventional stereotype. This slight variation in Jeshion’s point is the reason to go for a very general relation. At the same time, the general relation captures the core idea of stereotypes. The use of the non-neutral words require that the speaker *thinks* about the target in a negative way. That means that, according to generic descriptivism, slurs spread xenophobia because they are non-neutral words. An important point is that slurs spread xenophobia independently of anyone’s intentions. When Jill uses the slur ‘Frog’ because she thinks that the French are shoplifters, the use of the term transmits the idea that the French are vulgar because that is the stereotype of ‘Frog’.

Finally, the current view is advantageous because the distinction between speaker’s idiosyncratic beliefs and the general relation between the term and the target can account for descriptive ineffability. Since the reasons to use a slur can be very idiosyncratic, it may be difficult to recover the conventional stereotype.

5.4.3 Epistemic failing

In moral philosophy, the expressivist tradition adheres to two claims. Moral sentences are expressions of attitudes, either ‘boo’ or ‘hurray’, and as such moral sentences are not truth-apt. There is a similar sentiment among the views that recognise the expressive dimension of slurs (namely, among the moderate views). Slurring terms express the inner attitudes of the speaker and as such are not truth functional. I mainly agree. One could say that my main disagreement is a disagreement in principle. However, more substantial differences will come out in the course of the discussion. In short, it may be that slurs express attitudes which are not truth-apt. However, there are *reasons* for these attitudes which are truth-apt. So regarding slurs, the attitudes can be equated with negative beliefs and these beliefs are the result of *epistemic failing* which makes them unwarranted.

There are also expressives which are based on *good epistemology*. Predelli considers which one of the three proposals, subjective expressive, objective expressive or extensional target hypothesis is the most apt analysis of slurs. His conclusion is that the subjective analysis seems the most viable option and it has become clear that I agree. Predelli also considers which one of the three is the most apt analysis for a pejorative expression like ‘nag’. Here the intuitions are much hazier. It seems to me that even the extensional target analysis is not too far off. If a speaker calls some horse a ‘nag’, it might be for a good reason. She sees that the horse is old, weak and feeble. So she wants to distinguish that horse from the other stronger and faster ones. I think this analysis sounds plausible. Whichever analysis we choose, the point is that the speaker has good evidence for calling the horse a ‘nag’. The judgement is based on good epistemology.

Laudatives highlight the point even better. Laudatives are expressions that come with a ‘hurray’. Another horse-related term is ‘steed’ which is not just a horse but a fine horse. I think it is obvious that when a speaker refers to a specific strong and fast horse with the word ‘steed’, the speaker means only that horse. Again, the extensional analysis seems plausible but more importantly this is a case of good epistemology. I think the German laudative ‘Knabe’ for a boy deserves a similar analysis. It hardly is the case that a speaker using a word ‘Knabe’ refers to the set of all male children. Rather, by referring to a specific boy with the word ‘Knabe’, I think it is obvious that the speaker wants to distinguish that specific boy from other, more common male children. Furthermore, the speaker might have good evidence for this: the boy’s good manners, a good school report and so on but this is never the case with slurs. The extensional target analysis was rejected in the case of slurs and I claim that this is because of the epistemic failing involving slurs. Of course, there can be an epistemic failing involved in ‘nag’, ‘steed’ and ‘Knabe’. For example, a speaker might be basing his judgement about a steed on the fact that he is about to sell the horse and a steed is much more valuable than a nag. This is an epistemic failing (in a sense of a deception) and I claim that slurs involve this kind of epistemology. I also claim that derogation is dependent on

an epistemic failing and the linguistic behaviour of slurs is also influenced by this epistemic failing. This point does indicate that my dispute with expressivism is not just terminological but based on substantial difference.

Could it be that the xenophobes are at least sometimes right? Even if a xenophobe is sometimes right, it is still more likely to be a case of an epistemic failing than a case of good epistemology. We have already discussed sentences like:

(162) Himmler is a Boche.

This is a good candidate for good epistemology for a slurring expression. Let us assume that the speaker is challenged for the use of a slur and he responds by saying:

(163) Look, I am not saying that all Germans are cruel but Himmler was German and clearly he was a cruel man. Hence, my remark is appropriate.

It seems that the speaker is using the term in a divergent way, in a way that the extensional target hypothesis proposes. The denial of the epistemic failing then utilises Kripke's distinction between speaker's reference and semantic reference coupled with the idea of the extensional target hypothesis. The speaker's reference is based on the speaker's intentions and the semantic reference is the actual semantic reference of the term. These two might not always align. There are numerous examples of this but they usually concern proper names so they do not illuminate our current situation so well. (See Kripke 1982, 25 ff. 3 and Lumsden 2010, 297.) Presumably in (163), the speaker intends to target only a subset of Germans, namely those who are not only Germans but also cruel. However, it was already said that even (163) is offensive and this stems from the fact that when the speaker is referring to Himmler as a 'Boche', he is directing his biases toward every German; hence derogation. The upshot is that a sentence like (163) is not an epistemic failing at all. Rather, the speaker's explanation in (163) demonstrates the incompetency of the speaker. The xenophobe does not know the *semantic* reference of the term 'Boche'.

I find this judgement to be harsh. After all, the speaker knows that

the target of the term is the Germans (albeit, he thinks it targets a subset of Germans) and the speaker also knows that the term is derogatory. Linguistically, it would be hair-spitting to say that the xenophobe is an incompetent speaker. That is why I call this to case a true epistemic failing. The xenophobe is confusing his claim for a claim like

(164) That bastard stole my car

which can be based on good epistemology. The goodness depends on the properties of the individual but the epistemology of slurs never depends on individuals.

Even clearer case is my partially fictional case of ‘Finndevil’⁵³. It is a slur for Finns and it attributes first and foremost heavy-drinking to Finns. That is, the target of ‘Finndevil’ is the set all Finns and the stereotype is heavy-drinking. After consulting OECD statistics on alcohol consumption in Europe, I cannot definitively say whether there is some truth to the stereotype. The alcohol consumption in 2011 was pretty average in Finland (9.8 litres of pure alcohol) but still a bit closer to the leader of table, Austria (12.2), than to the bottom of the table, Italy (6.1). In comparison, the consumption in the UK was 10.3 litres. However, let us make this example more clear cut by imagining that the alcohol consumption in Finland was the highest. It seems to me that this stipulation makes ‘Finndevil’ still an epistemic failing. The xenophobes may have true beliefs but the methods of reaching those beliefs are unreliable. Gordon W. Allport has pointed that some stereotypes develop from sharpening and over-generalisation of facts (Allport 1958, 186). Even if Finns were at the top of alcohol consumption table, the nature of xenophobia sharpens and overplays this stereotypes. Moreover, xenophobia sees stereotypes as the defining or at least a very central feature of the target.⁵⁴ This point is elaborated with psychological essentialism in the next chapter.

⁵³The term is a literal translation from the original Swedish term ‘Finnjäväl’

⁵⁴David Ludwig made a similar suggestion in Third Barcelona Conference on Gender, Race, and Sexuality in June 2016.

5.5 Substitution principle

5.5.1 Appropriateness as a difference?

So far I have been alluding that there might be a substantial difference between generic descriptivism and moderate views, not just a differences in the aim. There are several possible candidates for cashing out the difference. One obvious possibility is that generic descriptivism holds that the use of slurs is *always* inappropriate because they are distinctly expression of xenophobia (except in-group use and educational use). Hence, the difference could be phrased by saying that generic descriptivism can explain why slurring words are *always* inappropriate while moderate views cannot. Generic descriptivism can explain the difference between

(165) That bastard stole my car.

(166) That Frog stole my car.

(165) might be appropriate depending whether the target actually stole the car or not but (166) is never appropriate. This is because of the nature of xenophobic information. Xenophobia is based on an epistemic failing. Generic descriptivism incorporates this point to its explanation of slurs. Because moderate views do not separate slurs from other expressives, they cannot explain the above difference. Unfortunately, this line of thought is confused. It is confused about the aims of moderate views. The crucial question in moderate views is: How do people express themselves? In other words, what are the linguistic mechanisms to express your opinions and also your attitudes? The root of a specific attitude is somewhat irrelevant. The only relevant specification is the nature of semantic information (to use Kaplan's term). So when a speaker utters:

(167) Hurray, Kaplan was promoted,

the hearer might think that the added 'hurray' is appropriate because she thinks that Kaplan is a very nice guy. When a speaker utters:

(168) That bastard Kaplan was promoted,

the hearer could think the added 'bastard' is inappropriate because Kaplan really is a very nice guy. A proponent of a moderate view can then continue and say that the appropriateness of

(169) That Frog stole my car.

depends on the appropriateness of xenophobia. When exactly is xenophobia and racism appropriate and justified? The answer to this rhetorical question highlights why slurs are always inappropriate. The social appropriateness or inappropriateness of a specific attitude is one thing, the ways to express that attitude is another. So moderate views can account for the difference between slurs and other expressives.

5.5.2 Character indistinguishability, sameness of sense and Mates case

To begin to see the real differences, let us recapitulate the following observation. The character of a simple expression is a function from the context to the semantic value of an expression. In other words, the character determines the semantic values of expressions. The semantic value of a complex expression such as a sentence depends on the semantic value of its parts. To repeat even more, here is the example again:

$$\llbracket \text{promoted}(\text{Kaplan}) \rrbracket_{c,w,t} = \text{T iff } \llbracket \text{Kaplan} \rrbracket_{c,w,t} \in \llbracket \text{promoted} \rrbracket_{c,w,t}$$

where the semantic value (true/false) of the sentence "Kaplan is promoted" depends on the semantic value of the parts of the sentence. Namely, it is true iff Kaplan is a member of a set 'x is promoted' in context c . Both Kaplan and Predelli claims that the character of any slurring term and its neutral counterpart is the same. In any given context, the truth conditional contribution of any given slurring term and its neutral counterpart is the same.

The standard definition of a character is a function from context to semantic value. However in *Meaning without Truth*, Predelli mentions a slight complication which in the end turns out to be trivial. For the sake

of the present purpose, I think that it is useful to go through this complication. Predelli refers to Kaplan's distinction between *circumstances* and *context* (Predelli 2013, 5). This produces a *two-stage model* which Kaplan illustrates in the following way. A character can be represented as functions from possible contexts to (propositional) contents and (propositional) contents as functions from possible circumstances (time-world pairs) to extensions. This "suggests that we can represent a content by a function from circumstances of evaluation to an appropriate extension. Carnap called such functions intensions." (Kaplan 1989, 501-505.) Predelli concurs but at the same time admits the awkwardness of the two-stage model. Especially, since nothing is lost by saying that the character maps the semantic values (extension) directly (Predelli 2013, 11). This is the trivial part but the non-trivial part is the following. Since character determines intension and the characters of slurs and their neutral counterparts are indistinguishable, it follows that slurs and the neutral counterparts have the same intension. This is, essentially, Williamson's claim. Hence, Predelli and Williamson agree on this point despite the opposite direction: Predelli reaches this conclusion from the Millian direction and Williamson from the Fregean direction. The upshot is that since both agree that any slur and its neutral counterpart share the same sense, the substitution between these terms is truth preserving. So in the following, the discussion concerning sameness of sense also applies to character indistinguishability.

Sainsbury and Tye present a general argument against the idea that there are distinct expressions with the same sense (or intension). They call it the *Mates case*, after Benson Mates (Sainsbury and Tye 2012, 76-79 and Mates 1952, 111-136). Both Predelli's and Williamson's treatment of slurs feature the sameness of intension. First, there are two preliminary principles associated with sense (or intension):

- (P1) Sentences with the same sense (intension) have the same truth value.
- (P2) If a sentence S1 results from S2 by replacing an expression used in S1 by one with the same sense (intension), S1 and S2 have the same sense (intension).

Sainsbury and Tye's argument then proceeds in a form of *Reductio ad Absurdum*:

1. Suppose distinct expressions e1 and e2 have the same sense.
2. Take any arbitrary sentence S1 containing e1 and let S2 be the result of substituting e1 (in S1) with e2.
3. By P2, the sentence pairs (a, b), (c, d) and (e, f) have the same sense:
 - (a) S1
 - (b) S2
 - (c) Whoever believes that S1 believes that S1
 - (d) Whoever believes that S1 believes that S2
 - (e) Nobody doubts that whoever believes that S1 believes that S1
 - (f) Nobody doubts that whoever believes that S1 believes that S2
4. 3e is true.
5. So by P1, 3f is true.
6. But 3f is false.
7. Contradiction.

Sainsbury and Tye diagnose that the problem is premise 1 which must be rejected. Sainsbury and Tye conclude that this a decisive argument against a general Fregean theory of meaning: no distinct expressions have the same sense. (Sainsbury and Tye 2012, 76-79.) This argument applies to concepts like GREEKS and HELLENES and hence the argument applies to sentences like (149a) and (149b). Let us see more closely Sainsbury and Tye's reasoning. It is a natural thought that if there is a cognitive difference between two concepts, the difference has to be a result of a semantic difference. Sainsbury and Tye disagree. They say:

A Fregean datum is that it's one thing to think that Hesperus is Hesperus, and another to think that Hesperus is Phosphorus; one thing to think that Hesperus is visible, another to think that Phosphorus is visible. We agree. Different thoughts are involved, that is, different structures of concepts, since the

concept HESPERUS is distinct from the concept PHOSPHORUS. We disagree with Fregeans that the difference requires postulating any additional *semantic* layer.⁵⁵ (Sainsbury and Tye 2011, 115.)

It could be argued that there are two points to the sameness of sense. First, if two expressions have the same sense, then they mean the same and, secondly, the consequence of this sameness is the preservation of truth in substitutions. It seems to me that Sainsbury and Tye agree with the first point but think that the substitution can fail anyway. Sainsbury and Tye think that different vehicles or containers (i.e. concepts) for the same semantic content can lead to differences in cognition. They mention three reasons:

1. *Ignorance*: A thinker may be ignorant of the fact that the concepts she uses have the same content. An example of this kind of case is an astronomer who does not know that HESPERUS and PHOSPHORUS have the same content.
2. *Structural differences*: Within the cognitive architecture, distinct concepts can present structural differences which then can lead to different computational patterns. Sainsbury and Tye use a computer analogy to illustrate their thought. Distinct concepts can have different “addresses” even if the content is the same.
3. *Accuracy*: Even though a thinker knows quite well that two concepts have the same content, the thinker may attain a more accurate report of the beliefs of others by using one concept rather than another.⁵⁶

On the basis of these differences Sainsbury and Tye think that a thought involving HELLENES is different from a thought involving GREEKS. As a result, they hold that, under suitable embeddings, the previous three points can lead to a difference in truth values. (Sainsbury and Tye 2011,

⁵⁵Emphasis in the quotation is mine.

⁵⁶The labels for the reasons are mine.

115-118.) At this point, it could be asked whether the three points could also affect slurs and their neutral counterparts and if they can, what would be the “suitable embeddings”. Let us start with the examinations of three points and their relation to slurs. It seems to me that the first point is rather trivial concerning slurs. I guess you could imagine communities that are either ignorant about the slurring term or ignorant about the neutral term. In these cases, the use of different concepts could affect the truth values, as Sainsbury and Tye predicted. But here we are concerned with a competent speaker who is fully aware of both terms and chooses to use one or the other. However, the second reason in conjunction with accuracy can lead to differences in truth values. As already said, Sainsbury and Tye argue that extra-semantic features can influence the identity of a thought. This goes against the traditional thought. In the traditional framework, the identity of a thought is a semantic issue. If the constituent senses of two thoughts are the same, then those thoughts are the same. (P1) and (P2) reflect this idea. For Sainsbury and Tye, this is not enough for the sameness of thought. They hold that, in addition to semantic content, the structure of thoughts has to be the same. They introduce the notion of *isomorphism* to explicate the point:

Isomorphism: Thoughts are isomorphic iff they share a complete tree structure, and their corresponding terminal nodes are concepts with the same content.

Two related notions are equally important:

Sub-isomorphism: Thoughts are sub-isomorphic iff they share a partial tree structure, and each terminal node either corresponds to a coreferential concept as the corresponding node in the other, or else falls under a higher node that is coreferential with a corresponding terminal node in the other.

Super-isomorphism: Thoughts are super-isomorphic iff they are isomorphic and if any two terminal nodes in one contain the same concept so do the corresponding terminal nodes in the other.

Sub-isomorphism is weaker than isomorphism and super-isomorphism is stronger than isomorphism. For Sainsbury and Tye, the thoughts

- (170) a. Odysseus is a Hellene.
 b. The inventor of the Trojan horse is a Hellene.

are sub-isomorphic. The thoughts involve co-referential concepts but (170b) has more complex structure. The thoughts

- (171) a. Odysseus is a Hellene.
 b. Odysseus is a Greek.

are isomorphic. The thoughts have the same content but involve different concepts at the terminal node. The thoughts

- (172) a. The Hellenes are the Hellenes.
 b. The Greeks are the Greeks.

are super-isomorphic. The definition of super-isomorphism quarantees that the pair in (172) is super-isomorphic. For Sainsbury and Tye, only super-isomorphic thoughts are identical. The crucial point is that only super-isomorphism preserves truth in every context. Sainsbury and Tye conclude by pointing out: “In applying originalism [...] especially in connection with the adequacy of reports of beliefs and other thoughts, such structural relations play a significant role.” (Sainsbury and Tye 2011, 111-113.)

When considering the suitable embeddings for the difference in truth values, Sainsbury and Tye’s remark already points to the right direction. The point is especially poignant when my current aim is considered. The aim of my project is to reveal the epistemic and cognitive differences behind the use of xenophobic slurs and the use of neutral words. Hence, on the one hand, the suitable embeddings are reports which characterise the differences between xenophobic thinking and civilised thinking and, on the other hand, the issue is the accuracy of these kind of reports. A xenophobe and a civilised person have both the slurring concept and the neutral concept and these concepts are containers of information. In the xenophobic cognition, the information about the French and the ‘Frogs’

are happily mixed, meaning that a xenophobe can store the same negative information both under FRENCH and FROG. But in the civilised cognition, there is a clear distinction between the two concepts and a civilised thinker would never confuse the two “addresses”. The civilised thinker does not think that the French are vulgar, even though she knows that that is the common stereotype of ‘Frogs’. This is precisely the reason why she does not use the slurring term. For this reason, it can be argued that the following pair has different truth values:

(173) Civilised speakers think that the French are the French.

(174) Civilised speakers think that the French are the Frogs.

It seems to me that the second one is false. In the civilised cognition, the two containers are not mixed in a way that the xenophobes mix them.

5.5.3 Accuracy and metalinguistic negation

At this point, it could be asked whether accuracy could be dealt in a non-truth conditional manner. Williamson does anticipate this kind of question. He says:

It might be objected to Frege’s account that if the words ‘dog’ and ‘cur’ have the same sense, then, on Frege’s own account of propositional attitude ascriptions, the sentences ‘Mary believes that every dog is a dog’ and ‘Mary believes that every dog is a cur’ must have the same truth-value, however much Mary loves dogs. Mary, a fully competent speaker of English, assents to ‘Every dog is a dog’; will she assent to ‘Every dog is a cur’? If she agrees that ‘Every dog is a cur’ is true but misleading, we can surely agree that ‘Mary believes that every dog is a cur’ is also true but misleading. (Williamson 2009, 148).

After this, Williamson cites an example from Kripke. According to Kripke’s example, natural kind terms ‘furze’ and ‘gorse’ are synonymous but a speaker learns them on different occasions and does not realise that they

refer to the same kind of plant.⁵⁷ Williamson goes on to say that, in this case, the sentences

(175) She believes that every furze is furze

(176) She believes that every furze is gorse

appear to have different truth values. He goes on to argue that this does not show that ‘furze’ and ‘gorse’ are not synonyms. Rather, it puts pressure on the right account of propositional attitude ascriptions. Admittedly, a lot hinges on Williamson’s choice of words as he says that sentences (175) and (176) *appear* to have different truth values. But if it is taken that Williamson does admit that the sentences do in fact differ in truth value, then originalism does provide the right kind of theory. It accommodates the facts that (175) and (176) differ in truth value and that ‘furze’ and ‘gorse’ are synonymous. Of course in (175) and (176), the reason for different truth values is ignorance but once the door is opened to the idea that “furze is furze” and “furze is gorse” are different thoughts, it becomes more plausible that the accuracy of reports can also lead to different truth values.

However, there is still one more option to save substitution principle. If push came to shove, dog-loving Mary could resort to *metalinguistic negation*. The hallmark of metalinguistic negation is that it leaves the content untouched. As Laurence Horn observes, with the metalinguistic negation, a speaker may reject the pragmatics associated with the register or the style chosen by another speaker. Horn continues that the items denied with the metalinguistic negation are matters of delicacy, not matters of content. The speaker using the metalinguistic negation is not protesting the truth conditional content but, rather, the style in which the content was expressed. Horn gives the following examples:

(177) a. I’m not a coloured lady, I’m a proud black woman!

b. He is not rich, he is filthy rich!

⁵⁷As far as I know, it is Williamson’s idea that furze and gorse are plants as Kripke does not mention what sort of natural kinds they are (Kripke 1979, 269).

As we can see, with the metalinguistic negation, one can deny the style or the choice of words. One can even deny the pronunciation. The key point is that a speaker using the metalinguistic negation does agree with content. (Horn 2001, 370-377.) So we could imagine the following discussion:

(178) Jill: Mary, your cur seems happy.

Mary: Yes, but she is no cur, she is a beautiful Border Terrier.

where Mary does agree with the content but disagrees the way it is put forward. In a similar sense, Predelli discusses Hom's proposal. Consider:

(179) He is Chinese but he is not a Chink.

Hom thinks that this is an appropriate statement and it is also true of every Chinese. (Hom 2008, 429.) Given the analysis of PEJ, (179) is somewhat analogous to a statement:

(180) He is Chinese but he is not a fictional Chinese

which obviously is true of every real Chinese person. Both (179) and (180) are analysed as a conjunction of two true statements. Expressive treatment, in turn, seems to be in trouble, if (179) is indeed appropriate. On the one hand given the expressive analysis, 'Chinese' and 'Chink' share the same intension and so they have the same semantic value. Thereby, their truth functional contribution is the same. So the expressive analysis gets the truth conditions of the latter conjunct wrong. On the other hand, this should be an appropriate statement but according to the expressive treatment, the speaker would have an unfavourable attitude towards the Chinese. The use of 'Chink' reflects this, even when it is negated (keep in mind that the expressive nature of slurs is not truth functional). In this sense then, (179) "may never be non-defectively uttered by any unprejudiced individual" (Predelli 2010, 181). In contrast, consider:

(181) These are bright colours, not bright colors.

I suppose one can imagine a pedantic fan of British English objecting to American English with (181). It seems obvious enough not to interpret her words as a contradiction of the form (A & not-A). The key point is that

a speaker using the metalinguistic negation is not rejecting the brightness of the colours. According to Predelli, (179) is best analysed as

(182) He is Chinese, not a Chink

which is a textbook example of metalinguistic negation. Another case that Hom brings forth is the sentence

(183) Institutions that treat Chinese as Chinks are morally depraved.

Hom says that here is a case for pedagogical truth and non-derogatory use of a slur. (Hom 2008, 429.) Again as such, the expressive treatment seems to have hard time explaining what is happening here. However, Predelli notes that surely ‘rabbit’ and ‘bunny’ are extensionally equivalent but still we have the following:

(184) Institutions that treat rabbits as bunnies are run by childish tree-huggers.

It seems that Predelli is correct in his observation that (184) has to do more with the way some words are *used*. It seems that we have two ways of accounting for accuracy, truth conditional way and non-truth conditional way. The question is which of these is the right one for slurs. In the previous, I claimed that slurs present distinctive patterns of thinking, xenophobic thinking. One of the central features of xenophobia is the epistemic failing and it is more likely that the slurring container stores information that is produced with the faulty epistemic methods. On the basis of this, I think that it is accurate to point out that a sentence like (174) is in fact false because the slur and its neutral counterpart do have different epistemic roles, at least in the civilised cognition. Furthermore, this might not be as dramatic as it first appears. if Sainsbury and Tye are right then the originalist framework does justice for *my* interpretation of Williamson’s point. It satisfies two demands: It treats slurs and their neutral counterparts as synonymous while assigning the right truth conditions for (173) and (174).

It seems to me that the resulting view accurately separates the roles of the xenophobic concepts and the neutral concepts in civilised thinking.

In this way, the current view does justice for the civilised efforts to hold on to good epistemic standards when thinking about social kinds.

5.6 Inference patterns

So far, I have considered inference patterns to be the most telling evidence concerning the use of slurs and I will continue to do so in distinguishing generic descriptivism from the Kaplanian framework in one very important respect. According to the Kaplanian view,

(185) Max is a Frog. Thus, Max is French

is valid but

(186) Max is French. Thus, Max is a Frog

is invalid. This is because Kaplan thinks that validity is based on semantic information and (186) adds information halfway through the inference. A good deductive practice should not do that. The nature of semantic information in (186) is expressive. Generic descriptivism does not claim that the added information is semantic. It holds that, semantically, there is nothing wrong with slurs. Hence both directions are valid but the conclusion in (186) is derogatory. While both inferences are valid, civilised people should not infer along the lines of (186) because it is offensive and only xenophobes infer that way.

This highlights the distinction between validity, correctness and appropriateness. Think of someone talking about Eric Cantona and a xenophobe goes:

(187) Oh right, that Frog.

According to the Kaplanian account, the utterance is not expressively valid because it adds *semantic* information about the negative attitude. With Predelli's idea, the invalidity can be explicated. The inference from (188) to (189) is not valid:

(188) Eric Cantona is French

(189) Eric Cantona is a Frog

but it can be made expressively and truth conditionally valid with EX-I. That is, the premise set has to be a conjunction of descriptive content and expressive witness. Hence, only the inference from (190) to (191) is valid:

(190) Eric Cantona is French (\wedge I regard the French as vulgar).

(191) Eric Cantona is a Frog.

In distinction, generic descriptivism does not see anything *semantically* wrong with the inference from (188) to (189). However, generic descriptivism holds that (189) is always inappropriate because it is derogatory and insulting. But even then, derogation is not semantic, at least not in a truth conditional sense which is the only semantic notion generic descriptivism recognises. This point captures the contrast between generic descriptivism and Kaplanian approach. Both Kaplan and Predelli hold that derogation is part of the meaning and hence it is captured with the expanded notion of validity. I do not think it is part of the semantics. The crucial difference is that Predelli thinks that only the inference from (190) to (191) is valid. Whereas I think both inferences, (188) to (189) and (190) to (191) are valid. The inference from (190) to (191) is on a par with the inference from (192) to (193):

(192) Snow is white and grass is green.

(193) Snow is white.

On my view, the adding of the attitude does not add anything semantic to the scheme. On my view, it is just another piece of information just like that grass is green. Surely, the negative attitude is intimately connected to the use of slurs. But as intimate as this connection is, it does not add anything to the semantics of slurs. So the information does not add anything to the semantic profile of a slur. However, it does add to the epistemological considerations concerning the use of slurs.

5.7 Summary

The motivations behind the central claims of generic descriptivism have now been laid out. This concludes the first part of my strategy. I introduced the idea that epistemic features can affect the use of an expression as convincingly as possible. As a summary, I will restate the claims put forward in the introduction:

1. Derogation is epistemic:
 - (a) The information a slurring term subsumes is xenophobic.
 - (b) This information is responsible for derogation because the information is negative and unwarranted.
2. It is conventionally recognised that slurs are non-neutral words. Generic descriptivism claims that the non-neutrality stems from a consensus in a specific belief state which then forms a general relation between the term and the target.
3. Derogation constrains the correct use of slurs, exemplified by the equivalence:

The use of a slur is correct iff the speaker has negative beliefs towards the target.
4. Finally, slurs reflect genuine cognitive differences in comparison with the neutral terms. This claim has two notable consequences:
 - (a) Even though it seems that slurs express attitudes, a more comprehensive understanding of slurs is achieved if we claim that slurs express beliefs (even if highly subjective beliefs).
 - (b) The substitution principle between the slurs and their neutral counterparts fails.

From here on, I will proceed to the second stage of my strategy and argue for generic descriptivism by laying out its beneficial consequences. An important part in the justification of generic descriptivism is the nature

of xenophobia. A central role in the explanation is given to the generic nature of xenophobic information which is attached to slurs. This account requires that generics are given a psychological explanation. The explanation of the psychological mechanism hinges on other phenomena, namely on psychological essentialism which is an integral part of the mechanism. Psychological essentialism plays also an important role in revealing the epistemology of xenophobia. The mechanism is also affected by emotions as a kind of guiding mechanism. It is claimed that emotions guide the mechanism that produces generics, in the sense that emotions influence the decision which properties of the target are generalised.

Chapter 6

PSYCHOLOGY OF XENOPHOBIA

6.1 Generics and xenophobia

6.1.1 Introduction

In this Section, we are going to look at some of the details concerning the epistemic failing related to slurs. As a preliminary remark, let us make a distinction between two sentences:

(194) I know some French guys who are not Frogs; they are not vulgar.

(195) I know some Frogs but they are not vulgar.

Although the difference might seem marginal between these sentences, there is a big difference in my proposed explanation. (194) is explained with the speaker's reference. The speaker intends to refer to a subset of French people with the slurring term. This is not case in (195). The speaker in (195) understands that 'Frog' refers to the set of all French people and that is why the speaker feels necessary to deny the stereotypical character in the case of *these particular* 'Frogs'. This seems analogous to a sentence like

(196) Those tigers are not striped.

This suggests that the information which slurs subsume is generic information. We all know that typically tigers are striped but we also know that there are some counterexamples to this. Williamson remarks that the implicature should be understood as a generic sentence like

(197) There is a tendency among Germans to be cruel.

In fact, many people have suggested that slurs have something to do with generics, one way or the other.⁵⁸ I very much agree but instead of saying that slurs produce generics (in a form of generic implicature), I argue that slurs are based on generics via xenophobic thoughts. That is, the information which slurs contain is generic. Furthermore, I think that Williamson's remark just pinpoints the problem rather than solves it.

In the following, I will lay out Sarah-Jane Leslie's view of generics. Leslie argues that there are two ways to approach meaning: The first one is a traditional semantic approach:

one of articulating semantic structure in sentences of a given language so as to enable a recursive assignment of truth conditions, or alternatively propositions, to all the sentences of that language. The assignments are understood as meaning giving, and the language in question can thus be taken to be a vast paring of sentences and meanings. (Leslie 2008, 3.)

We might now call this a *narrow view*. The second view could be called a *broader view*. According to the second view, the "task is to explore the actual cognitive abilities of speakers in order to explain just how it is that they are able to speak the language so understood" (Leslie 2008, 3). According to Leslie, only the second view is sufficient to explain generics. She argues that generics are based on psychological mechanism. At the same time, she is sceptical whether traditional semantics based on recursive assignments of truth conditions can explain the psychological mechanism.

⁵⁸Elisabeth Camp and Sally Haslanger acknowledge the generic nature of stereotypes. They both say that this is why slurring utterances are so hard to deny. (Camp 2013, 342 fn. 16 and Langton, Haslanger and Andersen 2012, 764). Also Predelli notes that the stereotype involves words like 'typically' (Predelli 2010, 180). This is a hallmark of a generic quantifier as seen below.

She says that the psychological mechanism produces generalisations. It provides a method of fast information gathering. In the following, I agree that the psychological mechanism explains well some aspects of xenophobic generalisations. The mechanism can then shed light on what slurs express, on xenophobic thoughts. However, I am a bit sceptical whether the view should be called semantic. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the nature of derogatory information and I have already said that the nature of derogation is epistemic. I do not think anything is lost if it is said that the psychological mechanism sheds first and foremost light on the epistemology of xenophobia.⁵⁹

6.1.2 Structure of generics

Leslie's work suggests that the key to solve the puzzle of generics lies in the psychological aspects of our knowledge about our environment. Generics are sentences like

(198) Ducks lay eggs.

(199) Mosquitoes carry the West Nile Virus.

The peculiar thing about generic sentences like (198) and (199) is that although we tend to endorse them, they seem to resist any sort of specific quantification. In actuality, not all ducks lay eggs. Only around 50 percent of ducks actually lay eggs, namely female ducks. The mosquito example is even more striking: only 1 percent of mosquitoes actually carry the virus. These point out the obvious that 'all' quantifier cannot be applied to generics. Furthermore, if you take (198) and try to quantify with 'all' quantifier, then surely

(200) Ducks are female.

should also count as true because you are quantifying over the very same set. Nevertheless, (200) is obviously false. (Leslie 2007, 375-376.) An

⁵⁹Furthermore, I am a bit sceptical whether semantics without compositionality and recursiveness is semantics. To me, they are integral parts of semantics.

intuitive thought is that if ‘all’ quantifier is too strong to be the key to interpret generics then some weaker quantifier can capture generics. Hence, ‘some’ quantifier seems more promising. In the light of the evidence, it is true that some ducks lay eggs (namely about 50 % of ducks) and that some Mosquitoes carry that West Nile Virus (around 1 % of the mosquito population). But when quantifying generics with ‘some’, we encounter a problem with monotonicity. Existential quantifier is an upward monotonic quantifier, meaning that you can always go from the subset to the superset but not the other way round: If some tall men are coffee-drinkers, then some men are coffee-drinkers but not the other way round. Monotonicity holds for (198):

(201) Some ducks lay eggs. Thus, some birds lay eggs.

but upward monotonicity fails for (199). We tend to endorse ”Mosquitoes carry the West Nile Virus” but we do not endorse

(202) Insects carry the West Nile Virus.

Neither we endorse

(203) Animals carry the West Nile Virus.

The intuitive reaction to the latter claim is something like

(204) Well, not all animals!

Hence, generics cannot be quantified with ‘some’.

Standard view

If semantics of generics is controversial, there is a bit more consensus concerning syntax of generics. Hence, it seems to be a good place to start the investigation. It is generally agreed that the logical structure of generics is a tripartite structure consisting a generics operator, a restrictor and a scope. With this structure of generic

(205) Tigers are striped.

can be regimented as

Gen x [Tiger (x)] [Striped (x)]

where ‘Gen’ is a generic operator, the restrictor specifies the set over which the variable ranges (in this case variables range over the set of tigers) and the scope specifies the property attributed to the members of the domain. (Leslie 2007, 387; see also Lewis 1998, 5-18.) Following Leslie, let us label this as the *standard view*. At the heart of standard view is that structurally generics are analogous to first-order quantification. It is just that quantities keep changing with generics. You can say that mostly a good indicator of generic sentence is the fact you can quantify it with the word ‘typically’ but even this does not always hold, as (199) shows. A typical mosquito does not spread the West Nile Virus.

Uniform simple view

But concerning the syntax of generics, even the standard view is challenged. David Liebesman proposes a *simple view* concerning generics. According to the view, generics are simply predications to kinds. On the standard view there has to be a distinction between generics and *kind-predications*. The difference is the following. The sentence

(206) Ravens are black.

is a generic sentence. According to the standard analysis, it contains a hidden ‘Gen’ operator and it is analogous to first-order quantification. As such, it must be distinguished from

(207) Dinosaurs are extinct.

as (207) cannot be a first-order quantified sentence. Extinction just is not a property of individuals. Only species or kinds can be extinct. Liebesman rejects the distinction and claims that both (206) and (207) are kind-predications, meaning that generics too are in actuality kind-predication. Thus, Liebesman rejects the analysis based on ‘Gen’. Liebesman’s most compelling point for the view is *uniformity*. The structure of a kind-predication like (207) consists a singular term and a property that is predicated to the referent of the singular term. Hence, ‘tigers’ denote

an object. It denotes the kind *Panthera Tigris* which is a singular object. The object includes all individual tigers as its members. (Liebesman 2011, 411-414.) This way (205), (206) and (207) all get a uniform bipartite analysis, instead of tripartite ‘Gen’ analysis:

Striped(tigers)
 Black(ravens)
 Extinct(dinosaurs)

The structure of these sentences is the same as the structure of a simple predication “a is F”: $F(a)$. Consider the following sentences:

- (208) Mosquitoes are widespread.
- (209) Mosquitoes are irritating.
- (210) Mosquitoes are widespread and irritating.

The simple view yields a uniform analysis for these sentences which is analogous to $F(a)$. While analysis based on ‘Gen’ is in trouble, especially with (210). According to ‘Gen’ analysis, (208) is a kind-predication and (209) is a generic sentence. What sort of sentence is (210) then? According to the simple view, the structure of (210) is simply

$F(a) \wedge G(a)$

but it could be said that from the standard point of view, we have a fallacy of equivocation. The term ‘mosquitoes’ has a different status in (208) and (209). In (208), ‘mosquitoes’ is a singular term denoting an object, the kind *Culicidae* and (209) involves ‘Gen’ ranging over individuals and yet in (210) ‘mosquitoes’ is treated uniformly.

For ‘Gen’ analysis, there are two type-shifting related proposals to overcome the previous problem, depending on the direction of the shifting. Leslie says:

[T]here are two dominant views, with one view being that bare plurals contribute kind-referring expressions which are then type-shifted down to become predicates of individuals in examples such as [209]. This predicate of individuals then restricts

the scope of *Gen*. This type shifting is triggered by the predicate in question ("is annoying") being a predicate of individuals, not kinds. In examples such as [208], no such type-shifting need occur. The other view is effectively the converse of the first – bare plurals contribute predicates of individuals with unbound variables. In examples such as [208], these predicates are type-shifted 'up' to become predicates of kinds, which is triggered by the predicate in question ("is widespread") being a predicate of kinds. (Leslie 2015, 19.)

Assuming that Liebesman is right, i.e. that kind-predication is the default reading of both (205) and (206), then 'Gen' analysis can be maintained by adding down-shifting operator \Downarrow to the analysis of (205):

Gen x [\Downarrow tigers (x)] [striped (x)].

In this analysis, (207) and (208) are left as they are since they are distinguished from generics as kind-predications in the first place. Their form is the familiar $F(a)$:

Extinct(dinosaurs)

Widespread(mosquitoes).

Assuming Leslie is right about the default reading of generics, then (209) is analysed in according to the standard analysis:

Gen x [mosquitoes (x)] [irritating (x)].

and (208) is analysed as kind-predication with the help of upwards type-shifting operator \Uparrow :

Widespread(\Uparrow mosquitoes).

This solves the problem of equivocation in (210). It can be analysed either as

Widespread(mosquitoes) \wedge Gen x [\Downarrow mosquitoes (x)] [irratating (x)].

or

Widespread(\uparrow mosquitoes) \wedge Gen x [mosquitoes (x)] [irratating (x)].

The former is an analysis according to which the kind-predication is the default reading and the latter is the analysis according to which generics are first-order quantification consisting ‘Gen’ operator.⁶⁰

Standard view and indefinite singular generics

Leslie points out first that Liebesman’s view is in trouble with sentences like

(211) Cats lick themselves.

If ‘cats’ refers to the species *Felis Catus* which has individuals as members, then it would seem that (211) is true if cats never lick themselves but only other cats. But that is not what the sentence means. It seems rather obvious that the speaker means that an individual cat licks itself and this is typical behaviour for cats. To express this, one needs first-order quantification or something which keeps the idea of quantifying over individuals, such as:

Gen x [cats(x)] [lick(x, x)].

Still in my view, one of the most compelling reasons to go for the mixed analysis of (210) is the so-called indefinite singular generics. Some generics can be rephrased in indefinite singular form:

(212) A tiger is striped.

(213) A duck lays eggs.

But not all bare plurals can be phrased in such a way:

(214) Barns are red.

(215) #A barn is red.

⁶⁰The type-shifting operators have obvious similarities with Gennaro Chierchia’s ‘cap’ and ‘cup’ which allow to form kinds from properties and vice versa: “‘ \cap ’ and ‘ \cup ’ are maps that allow us to get a kind from the corresponding property and vice versa” (Chierchia 1998, 349).

Leslie says that the view on generics should be able accommodate this feature and the simple view adjusts to this rather poorly but the standard view has a natural explanation for this. The analogy is again first-order quantification. Observe the sentence:

(216) If a lion has a mane, then it is a male lion.

This sentence is not just about an individual lion but rather proposed as general rule about lions. Hence, the sentence is naturally quantified with a universal quantifier:

$$\forall x ((\text{Lion}(x) \wedge \text{Mane}(x)) \rightarrow \text{Male}(x)).$$

It seems obvious that the speaker intends (216) as a general rule about lions, as rule to identify male lions. If this is so, then (216) provides a structural analogue for (212) and (213). This does suggest that generics are rather first-order quantifications than kind-predications.

6.1.3 Psychology of generalisation

Absent ‘Gen’

A curious thing is that natural language does not manifest this kind of operator: “there is no known language that has a dedicated, articulated generic operator” (Leslie 2007, 381). Leslie has an explanation for this. Note first that the semantic attempts to capture generics quantificationally or set theoretically are very complex. I will not rehearse those attempts here. Instead, I will go along with Leslie and say that those accounts suffer from what might be called *asymmetry of complexity*. The accounts offered are far more complicated than the simple definition for ‘all’ quantifier:

$$\text{All Ks are Fs is true iff } \{x: x \text{ is a K}\} \subseteq \{x: x \text{ is a F}\}$$

Yet a striking thing about the generics is that children learn them before they learn quantifiers: “[Y]oung children find generics easier to acquire and master than explicit quantifiers. Generics appear in children’s speech [...] significantly before explicit quantifiers do [...]” (Leslie 2007, 380.)

According to Leslie, the two facts, that there is no articulated operator standing for generics and that children find generics easier to learn than well-articulated quantifiers, are linked. How do all speakers learn generics when these generics are associated with the absence of an operator? Leslie provides an answer that ‘Gen’ is a default operator, just as the default understanding of

(217) John climbed the mountain

is that John climbed up the mountain. If one wants to diverge from the default reading, one must explicitly add ‘down’:

(218) John climbed *down* the mountain.

Similarly if a speaker wants to diverge from the default generalisation, the speaker must specify this with a quantifier.

Primitive mechanism of generalisation

Leslie’s more controversial claim is this:

Children do not ever learn truth conditions for generic claims. Rather, the generalisations that generic sentences express correspond to the cognitive system’s most primitive, default generalisations. The ability to generalise pre-dates the acquisition of language [...] This mechanism must be in place before the child begins to learn language, since pre-verbal infants have the capacity to generalise. (Leslie 2007, 381.)

There is a motivation for this claim, not only based on experiments on children⁶¹ but also on more theoretical grounds.

Animal kinds are similar on the level of abstraction. They make same kind of noise, they move in the same way and so on. Most important feature of this aspect is that the generalization can be made on as little evidence as one instance of the kind. By registering the characteristic dimension of a

⁶¹More on these experiments below.

kind, the mechanism enables efficient information gathering. The mechanism takes advantage of the regularities of a given kind. (Leslie 2007, 384.)

Three features

Leslie identifies three features on the primitive mechanism of generalisation:

1. Animal kinds are similar on the level of abstraction. They make same kind of noise, they move in the same way and so on. Most important feature of this aspect is that the generalisation can be made on as little evidence as one instance of the kind. By registering the characteristic dimension of a kind, the mechanism enables efficient information gathering. The mechanism takes advantage of the regularities of a given kind, like:

(219) Ducks lay eggs

which is a *characteristic generic*.

2. Cognitive mechanism is also well adopted to deal with striking or horrific information. For example, sharks attack bathers although very few sharks actually attack bathers. But the kind of information we are dealing here is such that one would be well-served to be forewarned about. The mechanism looks for a good predictor of the property in question. The kind ‘shark’ is a good predictor of bather-attacking property. This produces *striking property generics*.
3. When the generalised feature is neither characteristic nor striking, the triggering of the mechanism requires that the majority of the members of kind have this feature. For example,

(220) Cars have radios

(221) Barns are red

are *majority generics*. If only a small percentage of cars had radios, the generalisation would be false. Majority generics deal with information that is more neutral, i.e. does not stand out in the way striking features stand. It is not even a characteristic feature.

Finally, the mechanism is adapted to deal with counterexamples to the generalisations. (All of the above generics have counterexamples, even majority generics). We can distinguish two kinds of counterexamples, negative and positive counterexamples. A negative counterexample is a male duck. Although a male duck is a counterexample to (219), he does not show an alternative way of reproduction. If male ducks demonstrated some alternative way of reproduction (e.g. a mammal type of reproduction), it would then count as a positive counterexample to the generic (219). As long as the counterexamples are negative, the generic in question does not need revision. (Leslie 2007, 384-385.)

Against the narrow semantic treatment

The above list comprises the features of generics in such a way that the view can make sense of inferences and extensionality concerning generics. Leslie notes that no logic out there can quite capture the inferences concerning generics. As I noted, generics do not obey monotonicity and so it has been suggested that the logic of generics can be captured by the notion of defeasible validity which is a central notion in non-monotonic logics. Defeasible inferences are warranted relative to the information in the premises but may be retracted in the light of new evidence. For example

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} \text{Birds fly} \\ \text{Tweety is a bird} \end{array}}{\text{Tweety flies}}$$

is defeasibly valid but may be retracted if it is discovered that Tweety is a penguin. Nevertheless, even these kind of non-monotonic logics do not accommodate all of the inferential patterns concerning generics. The non-monotonic logics target to (defeasibly) validate the following schema:

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} \text{Ks are Fs} \\ \text{a is K} \end{array}}{\text{a is F}}$$

In many cases, this schema holds. It holds for example in the case of Tweety. So it has been suggested that generics support this schema (Asher and Morreau 1995; Pelletier and Asher 1997). Nevertheless, there are generics which fit poorly to this schema. For example, in

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} \text{Mosquitoes carry West Nile Virus} \\ \text{Buzzy is a mosquito} \end{array}}{\text{Buzzy carries the West Nile Virus}}$$

the conclusion is unlikely to be true since only 1% of the mosquitoes carry the Virus. Furthermore, Asher, Morreau and Pelletier couple the above view of defeasible validity with the view that Gen is a restricted ‘all’ quantifier. Gen then means roughly ‘all normal’ but even then, the following is wrong:

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} \text{Ducks lay eggs} \\ \text{Bob is a duck} \end{array}}{\text{Bob lays eggs}}$$

This inference is plainly wrong. Bob does not lay eggs because he is a male. According to Asher, Morreau and Pelletier, ‘Gen’ restricts the quantification only to normal individuals but there is nothing abnormal about Bob, i.e. there is nothing abnormal about being male. So it seems that Asher, Morreau and Pelletier’s account fit to some generics but not others. From this, Leslie draws a conclusion: ”There is no schematic inference that holds regardless of the particular generic that figures in it” (Leslie 2007, 388).

In sum, generics can be characterised in the following way. No monotononic or non-monotonic logic can capture all of the particular inferential patterns of generics. Also, no quantificational theory based on set-theoretical notions can capture generics. The view that Leslie advocates instead is that generics are based on primitive cognitive mechanism that

registers information on factors such as how striking and important it is (Leslie 2007, 394-398).

6.2 Psychological essentialism

6.2.1 Varieties of Essentialism and the minimal hypothesis

Douglas Medin and Andrew Ortony introduce the notion of psychological essentialism. They argue that we are psychologically prone to essentialise certain features in kinds. Although psychological essentialism is not by any means incompatible with ontological essentialism, still it must be distinguished from ontological essentialism: “[P]sychological essentialism [...] would not be the view that things have essences, but rather the view that people’s representations of things might reflect such a belief” (Medin and Ortony 1989, 183). Psychological essentialism does not therefore have an opinion about the truth of ontological essentialism. It only suggests that people tend to believe in it. Furthermore, a key aspect of psychological essentialism is that

[O]ur mental representations reflect the notion that properties differ in their depth and that deep properties are often intimately linked to the more superficial properties that so often drive our perceptions of and intuitions about similarity (Medin and Ortony 1989, 186).

This seems to be suggestive in the case of generics. It seems plausible that we easily essentialise the feature of ‘attacks people’ in the shark kind. This might be because various superficial features of sharks (big fin, sharp teeth and so on) are good predictors of the deeper and more sinister property of eating people or at least the superficial features are a good indicators of the disposition to attack people.

Michael Strevens distinguishes two kinds of essentialisms. One branches into three different versions but they have the commonality that they posit

two beliefs to agents:

- (i) Belief about essences.
- (ii) Belief about K(ind)-laws between essences (deeper properties) and observable properties (superficial appearance).

The K-laws are usually causal laws except Medin and Ortony maintain that they are merely statistical laws. Strevens own preferred view is a *minimal hypothesis*. According to the hypothesis, there is something in the kind that causes the observable properties but it does not hypothesise what that is. In other words, It posits only the belief in causal laws but not in essences: "you might have no opinion what does the causing [...] or you might think that it is just a brute fact about the world that being a tiger causes an animal to grow stripes". (Strevens 2000, 154 and 149-154.) In the following, we have brief overview of each four strands of essentialism. The point is not to choose right way to think about essentialism. Rather, the point is that the xenophobes have plenty of room to manoeuvre, when their xenophobia is challenged. (This will be discussed later below.)

Pure Essentialism

Strevens quotes Susan Gelman, John Coley and Gail Gottfried to characterise *pure essentialism*:

[P]eople seem to assume that categories of things in the world have a true, underlying nature that imparts category identity [...] that categories - and words referring to categories, such as common nouns - map onto that structure. On this view, categories are discovered rather than arbitrary or invented; they carve up nature at its joints. The underlying nature, or category essence, is thought to be the causal mechanism that results in those properties that we can see.

In this sense then people seem to assume that the essence of, say, tigers cause them to have stripes, to be ferocious and so on. (Gelman et al 1994, 344; see also Strevens 2001, 150-151.) Strevens encapsulates pure essentialism with three claims:

- (PE1) Some naive theories posit the existence of essences, though they may not represent what sorts of things essences are.
- (PE2) Essences are represented as what define (at least some of) the categories of a theory, in the sense that possession of the essence is represented as necessary and sufficient for category membership.
- (PE3) Essences are represented as being causally responsible for certain observable properties.

Statistical Essentialism

Medin and Ortony's preferred version posits a statistical link between essences and the surface features. That is, they agree with pure essentialist's first claim. However according to Medin and Ortony, the relationship often is causal but it does not have to be. It can be only statistical. In this sense, they disagree with the third claim of pure essentialism which states that the link has to be causal. Finally, the major difference with statistical and pure essentialism is that Medin and Ortony do not believe that having a certain essence is necessary and sufficient for membership of the kind. The three tenets of statistical essentialism then are:

- (SE1) Some naive theories posit the existence of essences, though they may not represent what sorts of things essences are. (Same as PE1.)
- (SE2) Essences are not represented as necessary, and perhaps not represented as sufficient, for category membership.
- (SE3) Essences are represented as being causally responsible for or statistically correlated with certain observable properties. Other kinds of links between essences and observable properties may also be possible.

The first claim corresponds to the first claim of pure essentialism. However, the second claim is in direct clash with the second claim of pure essentialism as it denies that essences are neither necessary nor sufficient

condition for the membership of the relevant kind. Strevens says that the third claim is a weakened version of the corresponding pure essentialist claim. The link between essences and surface features can be but do not have to be causal. (Strevens 2001, 152.)

Internal Essentialism

Internal essentialism holds that the subjects believe that essence of, say, tiger is inside of an individual tiger. Several experiments have shown that the subject do think that the insides are more important than the outsides concerning the essential features of a given kind. The essence might be the entire insides, or it can be in a certain place or organ such as heart, or it can be buried in the DNA. According to the hypothesis the subjects do not have to know exactly where the essence is but does rule out some of the option available for the two previous views. First, the subject cannot represent the essence of the kind to be on the surface. The skin, for example, cannot be the essence. Secondly, the subjects need to have some beliefs about the whereabouts of the essence and they need to have beliefs about nature of essences (contra pure and statistical essentialism). Finally, subjects cannot represent the essence as some aspect of the causal history of the kind, such as some fact about its parents or its evolutionary lineage. The claim that the essence of a tiger, for example, is somewhere inside of a tiger clearly rules out the possibility that the essence of a tiger is in some aspect of its causal history. (Strevens 2001, 153.) Consequently, the three claims of Internal essentialism are

- (IE1) Some naive theories posit a special role for a certain key property (or properties) of an entity's insides, the essential property, though they may not represent which property this is.
- (IE2) Essential properties are represented as what define the categories of a theory, in the sense that the possession of the essential property is represented as necessary and sufficient for category membership.
- (IE3) The essential property of an entity's insides is represented as being causally responsible for certain observable properties.

The previous three views adhere to both (i) and (ii). Strevens own preferred view is a minimal hypothesis which subscribe only to K-laws.

The minimal hypothesis

Strevens own preferred view is a minimal hypothesis. The core idea is that does not posit essences at all but only so-called K(ind)-laws. The idea is that the subjects who make inferences about kinds tend to believe in causal laws about kinds. The subjects need not to have any beliefs about essences:

Rather, [according to the hypothesis, the subjects need to believe that] *there is something about being a tiger that causes tigers to have stripes*. I take this formulation to be equivalent to *it is a causal law that tigers have stripes*. I will call these laws K-laws. (Strevens 2001, 154.)

One could say that the minimal hypothesis has most in common with PE and still it denies all the three claims made by PE. In this sense, it is more conservative than PE. Strevens goes on to explain that his view does not attribute beliefs about essences to people but his non-essentialist hypothesis attributes beliefs about causal laws. According to him, *beliefs about K-laws are enough to explain the K(ind)-patterns of inferences*.⁶²

6.2.2 Rationalising xenophobia

Switching between theories

First as it stands, essentialism and minimalism are by definition inconsistent. The denial of essences makes minimalism inconsistent with any strand of essentialism. Minimalism and essentialism cannot be both true at the same time. Nevertheless, a group of essentialists propose in their response to Strevens that minimalism and essentialism might co-exist as

⁶²Much of literature on psychological essentialism is due to Karen Neander who pointed me to the right direction.

a continuum in development.⁶³ Their point is that in child development, a child can go through phases from minimalism to essentialism:

Perhaps children begin their lives with nothing more than the minimal assumptions as depicted by Strevens and acquire understanding of causal mechanisms later in life [...] In this way, the minimal hypothesis may encapsulate an early set of beliefs and be thought of as a developmental precursor to essentialism. (Ahn et al 2001, 67.)

Concerning xenophobia, it seems to me that the same xenophobic subject can switch between the theories even though they are inconsistent.

First thing we have to remember is the status of the theories. In my view, they are the rationalisation of the results of psychological mechanism. They are there to justify the beliefs in generic statements, such as “tigers are striped” or “Ducks lay eggs”. Given the multitude of the interpretations of the ‘Gen’ quantifier, it is plausible that there more than one theory to rationalise the quantities. This is especially plausible with xenophobic beliefs. They are notoriously resistant to reform. Haslanger notes the same (using Leslie’s terminology):

Consider again:

(15) Latinos are lazy.

Does (15) assert a majority generic or a characteristic generic? Interpret (15) as a majority generic. To combat it, one provides many counterexamples. However, the speaker can then suggest that, although many Latinos aren’t lazy, they tend to be – thus embracing the characteristic generic. Instead interpret (15) as a characteristic generic. To combat it one provides evidence that, say, Latinos show no greater tendency towards laziness than any other group. The speaker can then suggest

⁶³The group is Woo-kyoung Ahn, Charles Kalish, Susan Gelman, Douglas Medin, Christian Luhmann, Scott Atran, John D. Coley and Patrick Shafto.

that, although it is not part of the nature or essence of Latinos to be lazy, most are. This slide back and forth between different interpretations of the utterance allows speakers to avoid taking responsibility for the implications of their claims. (Langton, Haslanger and Anderson 2012, 764.)

As noted, here Haslanger follows Leslie's terminology and that terminology is directed at explaining generics (as linguistic items), not K-pattern inferences. But I claim that analogous "slide back and forth" can be witnessed in rationalising xenophobic beliefs. First, most likely behind the formation of xenophobic belief is a striking feature. The subject sees someone who appears to be different in surface features (different clothes, language, habits and so on) having a striking feature. From this the subject, infers that social kind with those surface features also have the striking feature, even though they might not display it all the time. Then comes the mistake. The subject identifies a striking feature generic with a majority or a characteristic generic. These generic beliefs are then rationalised with some branch of essentialism. The most natural correspondence is with majority generic and statistical essentialism. When you add minimalism to this, the xenophobe has plenty of room to manoeuvre between the theories. Let us assume that the xenophobe justifies the generic "Latinos are lazy" with statistical essentialism. In this case, the essentialist belief can be held even if not all Latinos are lazy. The inference from latino to laziness is defeasible. The xenophobe needs to believe in statistical correlation between the social category of Latinos and the property laziness. If the xenophobe is then somehow convincingly shown that there is no statistical correlation, the xenophobe can resort to another form of essentialism and at the same time majority generic to characteristic generic. Although not all Latinos present laziness all the time, it is still one of features that characterises Latinos. Hence given the right conditions, Latinos are disposed to avoid proper work or perhaps the disposition is simply manifested in questioning protestant work ethics. The theory-ladenness has its place here. Leslie argues that a popular placeholder for essences is the genes. She says: "A number of social groups, such as

groups demarcated by race and gender, are often highly quintessentialized”. Here Leslie terms psychological essentialism as ‘quintessentialism’. She continues that DNA or genes are often invoked to explain essentialist beliefs. It is often thought that the genetic variation *within* ethnic groups is lower than *between* ethnic groups but actually it is not. The genetic variation within any given ethnic group is just high as between ethnic groups. (Leslie 2013, 122.) Again, if the xenophobe who believes that a certain striking property is based in the DNA is confronted with the information about genetic variation between and across ethnic groups, he or she can switch to saying that it is in fact in the culture. As Leslie point out:

[D]efenders of such claims as *Muslims are terrorists* routinely argue that there is something about Islam – its very doctrine – that instills in its followers the disposition to perform terrorist acts (Leslie 2007, 385).

Here the word “something” is already vague enough to provoke minimalism about K-patterns between Islam and terrorism: “something about Islam (whatever it is) instills the disposition to violence”.

In sum, It seems to me that all of the theories have their place in xenophobia and that is why xenophobic beliefs are so resistant to revision. Even though the theories are inconsistent, a xenophobe can maintain that one theory applies to that social group and another branch of essentialism applies to another group, depending the how he or she has been confronted to justify his or her beliefs.

6.2.3 Essentialism and social kinds

People have all sort of xenophobic beliefs about different ethnic groups even if they have never met a member of the group. People have been just told they are like that. These beliefs are resistant to revision just because these beliefs are essentialised. Leslie and others have conducted experiments in social transmission of essentialist beliefs. Essentialist be-

liefs seem to have connection with social prejudice. Interestingly, generics play a key role in this.

Allport notes that there is stark contrast between essentialism concerning biological kinds and essentialism concerning social kinds (Allport 1954). Leslie and others put the contrast in a following way:

For biological categories, psychological essentialism facilitates learning and knowledge acquisition. For example, viewing category members as fundamentally alike allows a child to infer that if one tiger is ferocious, then other tigers will be too [...] Similarly, viewing category-linked properties as arising from an underlying nature allows children to infer that a baby tiger will inevitably grow up to be ferocious, even if it does not appear ferocious at birth [...] When applied to social categories, psychological essentialism can have pernicious consequences, however. As suggested by Allport's observations, essentialist beliefs about social categories [...] facilitate social stereotyping and prejudice. (Rhodes et al 2012, 1)

Leslie and others summarise the results of previous studies with two points:

1. Although children show early signs of essentialism concerning biological kinds (by age of 4 years), they have essentialist beliefs only about a small subset of social categories.
2. Children growing up in a conservative communities have more social essentialist beliefs than children growing up in a more liberal environment.

From these points Leslie and others draw the following conclusion:

3. There is an interaction between the emerging cognitive mechanism and cultural input. Cultural input guides how children map essentialist beliefs about particular categories in their environment.

In their study, Leslie and others were especially interested in the nature of the cultural input related to social essentialism. (Rhodes et al 2012, 1-2.) In this respect, this sort study is especially apt for testing the impact of generic language in the formation of essentialist beliefs. Previous studies have shown that it is difficult to estimate the impact of generics concerning the formation essentialist beliefs about biological kinds as the beliefs are formed so rapidly and early stage in the development even in the absence generics. All you can say that the essentialist beliefs about biological kinds form with or without generics. This fact makes social essentialism very apt for testing ground if generics facilitate the transmission of essentialist belief.

6.2.4 Studies on the transmission of social essentialism

Generic language and formation of essentialist beliefs

Leslie and others conducted three different experiments on the transmission of essentialist beliefs. Needless to say, the essentialist beliefs were about social kinds. The first experiment studied the difference between plural generic language (e.g. Tigers are striped) in comparison to specific language (*This* tiger is striped). The second experiment studied singular generic language (A tiger is striped). Again, the comparison was specific language. These two experiments studied how generic language facilitates the formation of essentialist beliefs. The third experiment studied how generic language facilitates the transmission of essentialist beliefs.

The first experiment was the following. Experimenters came up with a new social kind called *Zarpies*. The Zarpies were introduced to subjects through a illustrated storybook. Each picture presented a single person with some property. At the same, it was made sure that the subjects could not identify the Zarpies with any existing social group. In one picture, the Zarpie was, say, an Asian man. In the next picture, the Zarpie was a caucasian woman and so on. The property was described with a single line text and there three versions of the text:

Plural Generic: Look at this Zarpie! Zarpies are scared of ladybugs!

Specific: Look at this Zarpie! This Zarpie is scared of ladybugs!

No label: Look at this one! This one is scared of ladybugs!

The subjects were randomly assigned to one of these versions of the storybook. After this, there were two versions of the study. In the first version, adult subjects read the storybook before answering the test questions. In the second version, the experimenters read one of the storybooks (more than once) to a child participant in two sessions and then the children completed the test questions. The test questions measured the extent to which the subjects

1. expect properties associated with the new category to be innate and inevitable (inheritance items),
2. expect properties attributed to a single category member to extend to other category members (induction items),
3. view category membership as causing/explaining the development of typical properties (explanation items).

In both versions of the tests, the subjects gave more essentialist responses when the generic version of the storybook was in question. Both adults in the first version of the test and the children after hearing the story gave more essentialist answers when the storybook was written in generic language. Leslie and others draw the conclusion that generic language about a novel and diverse social category does lead to essentialist beliefs about that category both among adults and children.

The study was then replicated with indefinite singular generics. That is,

No label: This one is scared of ladybugs!

was replaced with indefinite singular generic descriptions:

Singular Generic: A Zarpie is scared of ladybugs!

This study showed that there is no difference between bare plural generics and singular generics. Both kind of generic forms support the formation of essentialist beliefs.

Generic language and transmission of essentialist beliefs

The first two studies tested whether generic language can enable essentialist beliefs and the studies showed that, indeed, it does. The third study tested the transmission of essentialist beliefs through generic language. The parents were told a story about the Zarpies in two ways. One induced essentialist beliefs about the Zarpies by describing the Zarpies as a distinct kind of people with biological and cultural differences from other social groups. The other story highlighted the Zarpies' biological and cultural similarities with other social kinds. Thereby inducing non-essentialist beliefs about the Zarpies. A pilot study confirmed this. After that, the parents were given the storybook used in the first two studies without any text. The parents were asked to describe the pictures to the children. It should not come as a surprise that parents who were exposed to the essentialist beliefs used more often generic language than parents who had non-essentialist beliefs about the Zarpies. it is then fair to say that generics *do* transmit essentialist beliefs.

Results of the studies

Leslie and others say that the three studies provide strong evidence that generic language does provide a mechanism that facilitates the transmission of essentialist beliefs. However, they are hesitant to conclude that generic language *generates* essentialist beliefs as

Essentialist beliefs [...] go far beyond any content that is explicitly communicated by generic language, and essentialism can emerge in the absence of generic language, such as in the case of animal kinds [...] (Rhodes et al 2012, 4.)

At this point it is enough to say that essentialist beliefs are generated by the psychological mechanism. Leslie and the others continue:

Rather, social essentialism appears to result from the interplay of cognitive biases and cultural input; children's cognitive biases lead them to assume that some or other social categories reflect essential kinds, and generic language signals to them to which categories they should apply these beliefs. (Rhodes 2012, 4.)

After this, generics take over by transmitting the essentialist beliefs.

Generics and negative evaluations

I have saved one interesting finding for last. In the third study the adults were asked to comment the activities and properties depicted in the pictures. The commentary was categorised as negative (e.g. "That's yucky") or positive (e.g. "That's cool, right"). Curiously, the subjects produced more negative comments from the essentialist perspective than from the non-essentialist perspective. In other words, "parents who were induced to hold essentialist beliefs about Zarpies were more likely to produce negative evaluative statements about them". This result suggests that essentialist beliefs may contribute to the negative social attitudes. (Rhodes et al 2012, 4.) Given the connection between the transmission of essentialist beliefs and generic language, it can be concluded that generic language is also associated with negative attitudes.

6.2.5 Emotions and attention

It has been hypothesised that one of the functions of emotions is to speed up the decision process in an unexpected situation. Especially, emotions draw our attention to salient features of the situation. (Faucher and Tappolet 2009, 107.) de Sousa says

[Emotions] limit the range of information that organism will take into account, the inferences actually drawn from potential infinity, and the set of live options among which we choose (de Sousa 1987, 195; Faucher and Tappolet 2009, 107).

In this sense then, emotions draw our attention to the salient features of the object. At the same time and as Bennett Helm argues, emotions gives us a focus on these salient features. Emotions help us to evaluate these features as dangerous, offensive, nutritious and so on. (Helm 2009, 248-255.) In their paper "Fear and Focus of Attention" (2009), Faucher and Tappolet bring together the empirical evidence backing the connection between fear and attention.

Concerning the attentional phenomena, there is a distinction between *involuntary* and *voluntary* attention. Involuntary attention is said to be under the control of external stimuli and voluntary attention is said to be under the control of the subject's goals and will. In our context, the interesting difference between these two forms of attention is the developmental point of view. It has been noted that the involuntary attention is developmentally earlier than the voluntary attention. It has been proved that there is a gradual development from involuntary attention to voluntary attention. Furthermore, there is psychological evidence that, given appropriate setting, the involuntary attention will kick in. There are several types of experiments conducted to investigate *attentional bias*. The attentional bias is especially apparent when emotions are involved as the so-called Emotional Stroop tasks shows. The involuntary attention in connection to emotional response has also been so-called Popout tasks. (Faucher and Tappolet 2009, 114-121.)

Kent Bach notes that some emotional disorders provides data to investigate the connection between emotion and attention because emotional disorders "may be regarded as extreme versions of normal relations between emotion and attention" (Bach 1994, 66; Faucher and Tappolet 2009, 114). Indeed this kind of approach has been popular in psychological studies and many emotional disorders can be viewed as problems in attentional management:

[M]any studies show that anxiety is accompanied by an increase in involuntary attention to threat stimuli and that it also tends to impair performance on certain tasks requiring attention (Faucher and Tappolet 2009, 114).

In the Emotional Stroop tasks, the subjects were presented words with different colours. They were asked to ignore the meaning of the word and only name the colour of the word. It turned out that subjects who had emotional disorders had more difficulties to name the colour of word when the meaning of the word was fear-related. Furthermore, it was established that the emotion-attention connection can be very selective. For example, panic patients manifested heightened bias towards words like ‘death’ and social phobics found were more sensitive to socially threatening words. The difficulties were based on the time spent on each word. Concerning the fear-related words, the increased time interval would suggest that the involuntary attention driven by the emotion hinders the voluntary attention which the subject uses to identify the colour. (Faucher and Tappolet 2009, 115-116.)

The Popout tasks also study how threatening stimuli catch (involuntary) attention. In one experiment, the subjects were shown nine images in three rows. The images were either nine emotionally neutral images or eight emotionally neutral images and one threatening image, a spider or a snake or such. The subjects were asked to push the left button if they thought all the images were the same and press the right button if the images contained an intruder (a spider or a snake). The results were that the reaction time was shorter when the intruder was among the images. Furthermore, the time spent to find the intruder is independent of number of distractors. “It is as if the spider or snake is “popping out” from the background, capturing attention automatically”, summarise Faucher and Tappolet the findings (Faucher and Tappolet 2009, 119). An interesting further finding is that the popping out does not occur with an image of neutral image on a background of threatening images. The experiment has been repeated with array of faces, happy faces and angry faces, with similar results. (Faucher and Tappolet 2009.)

The invited conclusion from these experiments is that fear is related to attentional bias: “People in such states appear to experience *involuntary orienting of attention towards congruent stimuli*”⁶⁴. It seems that fear

⁶⁴Italic in the original.

can be associated with "an automatic processing bias, initiated prior to awareness" which serves to detect threatening cues from the environment and hence it produces information about threats. (Faucher and Tappolet 2009, 123.) Although these experiments concern only fear, they are also indicative concerning other strong emotions.

6.3 Slurs and biases

Generalisation and emotions

At this stage, the mechanism of over-generalisation can finally be laid out in detail. Leslie argues that we are prone to generalise striking properties. She also argues that this mechanism of generalisation is partly responsible for xenophobic thoughts and I agree with this and I go even further by arguing that slurs are based on these xenophobic thoughts. One might quite rightly now ask, why the over-generalisation happens in connection to negative properties or at least properties which are evaluated as negative. Our discussion on emotions and attention clarifies this point. In the following, the answer is developed in two stages. The first stage concerns members of a kind, i.e. individuals. The second stage concern the actual generalisation to the whole kind.

First as we have seen, our attention is involuntarily focussed on properties to which we have an emotional response. In our brief survey, the findings concern only the connection between fear and attention. But as Faucher and Tappolet hypothesises, the connection between attention could generalised to other emotional attitudes, such as anger, disgust, contempt. Helm's thoughts also suggests that such generalisation to other emotions can be made. Helm points that the target of our attention has some emotional importance in respect to a certain background concern. In this respect, it is not huge surprise that our attention is focussed on bear's big size and big fangs instead of of his cute bobtail and cuddly palms. It is just that our attention is focussed to the bears size and threatening posture because we *evaluate* it as dangerous. In connection to Leslie's hy-

pothesis of over-generalisation, we have reasonable grounds to argue that the striking feature of an object is likely to be negative because it is more likely to get an emotional response. Thereby, it is more likely to draw our attention.

Second, the property to which we have an emotional response gets generalised across the whole kind because the individual of the kind is recognisably a member of that kind on the basis of its surface features. When we come across a threatening bear (and somehow manage to escape the situation), the next time we will evaluate that individual as threatening too on the basis of its surface features (big size, brown fur and bobtail, of course) even though this individual happens to be sleeping at that moment. To repeat what has been said earlier, generalisation requires two sets of properties or features present in the individual. First, the target has to present the feature that is emotionally evaluated as, say, dangerous. Secondly, equally important are the distinguishing surface features. After all, these features help us to determine the kind to which the evaluated feature of attention is essentialised. Leslie calls this surface feature a *good predictor* of the striking property (Leslie 2007, 385). On the basis of the distinguishable surface feature, we are able to predict the presence of the striking feature, even though it might not be visible at the moment.

Xenophobic thoughts and slurs

To begin our investigation how the mechanism contributes to the transmission of xenophobic thoughts, let us start with the following Leslie's thought. She emphasises the importance of the distinguishing surface feature in the following way:

Of course, it would be inefficient to generalize such information [about striking property] to every kind that has a member with the property. We do not judge "animals carry the West Nile Virus" or even "insects carry the West Nile Virus" to be true, even though both kinds have some members that carry the virus, since those virus-carrying mosquitoes belong to both

kinds. The mechanism, I suggest, looks for a good predictor of the property in question, and thereby avoids generalizing too broadly. (Leslie 2007, 385.)

Here Leslie hypothesises that the point of this aspect of mechanism makes it more useful for human purposes. Too broad generalisation would render the mechanism not only useless but in fact disadvantageous. Think about the situation where someone evaluates a bear to be dangerous. Surely, it would be disadvantageous to generalise from this that animals are dangerous. For humans clearly benefit from interaction with some animals. That is why the mechanism looks for identifying surface features to identify the specific kind. However, this feature of the mechanism seems to have a downside in connection to social kinds. It seems that we are more prone to make generalisation on the basis that some social group just looks different, i.e. this group possesses the relevant distinguishing surface feature:

If, for example, an accountant or two are convicted of murder, we do not judge that accountants are murderers, because we do not think that accountants are in any way generally disposed to be murderers. The odd murdering accountant is a 'bad apple', in no way indicative of the nature of accountants in general. Interestingly enough, defenders of such claims as *Muslims are terrorists* routinely argue that there is something about Islam—its very doctrine—that instills in its followers the disposition to perform terrorist acts. (Leslie 2007, 385.)

But at the same time, the striking feature which gets essentialised has to be striking in that we have an emotional response so it and hence it catches our attention. For example, imagine someone who has a strong opinion about thieves sees another person shoplifting a chocolate bar. He notices this because the other person is different in some way, speaks different language or the person has a distinctive attire. From this he generalises that *immigrants* are thieves. But at the same time, he forgets that last week two of his colleagues were caught cooking the company books. The crucial point is that in the shoplifting incident both the distinguishing

surface feature and the striking feature were present. In contrast, the colleagues did not have the distinguishing surface features. They had a similar ethnic background as our subject; hence the mechanism was not triggered. Finally, our subject despises thievery and so he had strong emotional response to shoplifting.

It is my contention that slurs contain and indeed transmit the negative information about social kinds. Generics help in the formation and in the transmission of essentialist beliefs. It may very well be that, analogously, slurs induce xenophobic beliefs but even if that was not the case, it seems overtly clear that slurs transmit negative information about the target. The belief “immigrants are thieves” can be identified as a speaker’s specific belief state about the target and on the basis this specific relation he uses the term ‘wetback’ correctly when he refers to immigrants with it. Because of the general relation between the term and the target, it is conventionally recognised that the user of ‘wetback’ has negative thoughts about immigrants. The use of slurs reveals speaker’s (xenophobic) biased beliefs about the target. Usually, these biases are unwarranted and as such they are cases of epistemic failings. The speaker has formed them on the basis of too few instances, in the way the example explicates. Some negative feature of an *individual* is generalised across the *whole social group*. When a person applies (in thought or out loud) the slur ‘Frog’, as in

(222) Max is a Frog

the xenophobe thinks about the French in a certain way. Because this way is xenophobic, the thought is offensive even in the claims in which nothing xenophobic is actually said. Rather, the slur is just applied to the target.

On the cognitive side, the problem with slurs is that they incorrectly invite us to think of the targets in certain way. They suggest that some negative feature is a central feature in the target kind and worth highlighting with choice of words. Therefore, the target of a slur is worth of derogatory term. In other words, the unwarranted nature of slur is that

Max is worth derogation because he is French.

But however mistaken the xenophobes are, these epistemic differences between the xenophobic mindset and civilised thinking need not to entail semantic differences between the slurring words and the neutral words. It seems clear to me that when the xenophobes are referring to French people as ‘Frogs’, they are mistaken *about* the French people.

6.4 Summary

This chapter begun with the psychological analysis of generics. This analysis supplemented the idea that slurs contain generic information. The key element is the psychological mechanism that produces the generic information. Leslie argues that the psychological mechanism of generalisation is based on two things: on distinguishable surface features and on a deeper feature which is generalised across the kind.

An integral part in the psychology of generalisation is essentialisation. The generalised deeper features are thought to be essential features which characterise the kind. I presented different versions of essentialisms. This gives the xenophobe some room to quibble and at least partly explains why the xenophobic beliefs are so resistant to reform.

I also laid out a brief overview of studies concerning the connection between attention and emotions. The experiments confirmed that there is a connection between emotions and the objects of our attention. Our attention is drawn to features to which we have emotional response.

A crucial part in my argumentation is the transition from natural and biological kinds to social kinds. The generalisation with an emotional input works well with natural and biological kinds but not so well with social kinds. Leslie and others showed that generic language transmits essentialised beliefs far more efficiently than specific language. Furthermore, generic language is often accompanied with a negative attitude towards the target.

Finally, it is shown that generic language transmit essentialist beliefs and negative attitudes but it is my contention that slurs transmit generic

information and with that you the package deal of essentialised information as well as negative attitude toward the target. Concerning social kinds, the mechanism can produce *negative* and *unwarranted* beliefs about the target, in the sense that the xenophobic beliefs is often based on isolated incident and generalised across the social kind. The idea is that once the xenophobic over-generalisation is in place, then slurs take it from there. Slurs contain and transmit xenophobic information.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Pure views

Generic descriptivism claims that derogation is a part of the descriptive information that is associated with slurs. In other words, the nature of derogation is epistemic, not semantic. The structure of this work has been following the operation of purging semantics from derogation. Throughout the investigation, other views have contributed to this process in a positive way and in a negative way.

Three first views, pure expressivism and the two forms of pure descriptivism claims that there is something wrong with slurs and the treatment of slurs should reflect this. The summary of these views is that they all hold that there is something wrong with the *meaning* of slurs. Pure expressivism claims that slurs are not truth apt at all. Hom and May's pure descriptivism holds that slurs are systematically false. Particularly, all of the views claim that the semantic badness is manifested in the truth conditions of slurs. Even Dummett holds that the consequence relation of language L_N consisting only the neutral term is different from language L_{Sl} consisting also the slurring term. I agree that there is something wrong with slurs and that the treatment of slurs should reflect this.

Nevertheless, I do not agree that the *semantic* treatment of slurs should reflect this. It is my claim that all of the attempts to show why the badness is somehow reflected by the truth conditions are unsuccessful. In general,

the problems has to do with accommodating linguistic evidence concerning the use of slurs. Pure descriptivism cannot explain why someone can infer the descriptive information from a slurring utterance since it holds that slurs do not have descriptive content at all. Concerning Hom and May's pure descriptivism, it is somewhat ironic that they cannot explain civilised understanding since Hom and May think that most important question concerning slurs is "How can a competent, rational speaker know that meaning of slurs". The inability is most revealing in relation to the inference patterns concerning slurs. Civilised speakers particularly infer effortlessly from the slurring utterance its neutral content. The ability to infer from "Max is a Frog" that "Max is French" is, in my view, easily explained with the co-referentiality of the slurring term and its neutral counterpart.

If pure descriptivism cannot explain the civilised thinking, what about xenophobic thinking. Dummett's inferentialism aims to answer this question. It claims that the slurring words produce a non-conservative extension of the language which does not contain the slurring words but only the corresponding neutral words. To put it a bit crudely, this is supposed to show the warped thinking of the xenophobes but as Williamson shows this strategy does not work. If the xenophobic utterances are taken as indicators of xenophobic thinking, then the evidence shows that xenophobes do not think the way Dummett suggested.⁶⁵

7.2 Moderate views

I reside with moderate expressivism and descriptivism because the views can explain the civilised understanding with the co-referentiality thesis. Both views hold that the slurring terms and the counterparts are co-referential but at the same time the views expand semantics to accommodate the expressive content of slurs and other expressive terms (excluding Williamson). Moderate expressivism expands the semantic types to ex-

⁶⁵Even though I later discuss more compelling way to think about Dummett's proposal, I still disagree with the basic point that the meaning of slurs reflects derogation.

pressive types. The crucial feature of these types is that they can never be input, only output. That feature secures the independence from truth functional dimension. There simply is not any truth functional operation over expressive types. Predelli expands (*pace* Kaplan) semantics to include expressive validity along with truth functional. The move accommodates Kaplan's idea that inference is based the preservation of semantic information, not on the preservation of truth. Finally, Williamson does not expand semantics. He thinks that the slurring effect can be handled with conventional implicature which is part of the meaning of a term, broadly construed. Williamson most adamantly claims that the slurring effect is first and foremost a linguistic phenomenon. He explicitly says that his view is about the use of language and only secondary it is about the speaker's beliefs. The way that the slurring effect is produced resembles the difference between 'and' and 'but'. To Williamson, slurs tell something general about the use of language.

In my view, the generality of the method is a crucial factor here. Moderate views are not particularly about slurs. The key question is how do we express non-truth functional attitudes. In essence, the views are an exploration to the nature of language.

The pure views suggested that there is something wrong with the semantics of slurs. Moderate views denies this. The badness of racism and xenophobia is one thing, the semantic means to express racism and xenophobia is another. I am sure that advocates for moderate views think that racist and xenophobic attitudes particularly nasty and *erroneous* attitudes. Predelli even says this explicitly but just because xenophobia is a nasty attitude, it does not have to make the means to express xenophobia faulty. Although I think this a level-headed starting point, I still hold that there is something wrong with slurs and the treatment of slurs should reflect this. This is the part I find compelling in the pure views. Since I denied that the nature of derogation is semantic, I need to find a another way to reveal derogation specific to slurs. The way I am proposing is epistemic. This is main thesis of generic descriptivism.

7.3 Generic descriptivism

On one hand, the point I take from expressivism is that truth conditions do not reflect derogation. On the other hand, the lesson learned from descriptivism (and from pure expressivism) is that slurs are based on mistaken beliefs and the treatment of slurs should reflect this.

To accommodate these claims I begin with a way to explicate derogation. My method borrows from Predelli in that there is truth conditional aspect to correct use of slurs as I go on to put forward the equivalence between correct use and speaker's biased beliefs. My view also borrows from originalism in that the equivalence should not be thought to reveal semantic features of slurs (as Predelli's view suggests) but epistemic features. The decision to view derogation as an epistemic feature allows to maintain the conjunction of the co-referentiality thesis and the view that slurs contain a mistake.

In short, originalism holds that the failure of the substitution principle is not a semantic problem. Rather, it is an epistemic problem. In the same spirit, generic descriptivism holds that the failure of substitution principle between the slurring term and its neutral counterpart is a sign of epistemic differences, not semantic differences. The admission that the substitution between slurs and neutral terms fails is a major difference compared to expressivism. In my view, this is a consequence of the attempt to incorporate the idea of mistake to the treatment of slurs.

Generic descriptivism proposes that the use of slurs and the nature of xenophobia are connected. Generic descriptivism puts forward that slurs are correctly used if and only speakers have negative beliefs. These negative beliefs are biased beliefs. The biases are xenophobic and at the heart of xenophobia is generic information. There are three claims to the generic information. (i) Generic information allows exceptions. The next two points explain the central features of xenophobic beliefs which make them appear like attitudes. (ii) The mechanism works with emotions and that is why the cognitive state is emotionally charged. (iii) The belief produced by the mechanism fit into the pattern of perspective dependence.

I do not think I am over-intellectualising civilised speakers when I say that civilised speakers (at some level) realise that xenophobia is a product of the over-generalisation and the use of slurs reflect this.

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